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FOUR LECTURES

ON

SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY.

LONDON :

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FOUR LECTURES

ON

SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY,

DELIVERED IN THE

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BY

ISAAC TAYLOR.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THESE Lectures were delivered at the instance of the Committee of the "London City Mission," and if that Committee be held responsible for having made the request, its responsibility there ceases. For whatever the Lectures may contain the Lecturer alone is answerable, and he supposes it not unlikely that more than two or three passages might be adduced with which neither that Committee, as a body, nor the members of it as individuals, would fully concur. The Lecturer confidently hopes, nevertheless, that, in frankly expressing his sincere convictions, as he is accustomed to do, he has not

infringed the proprieties of the position he occupied, as called forward on this occasion by them.

In so calling him forth, his much-esteemed friends were aware that the Lecturer has never been used to speak the language of any one section of the religious commonwealth; and while well assured of his firm attachment to the great principles of the Gospel, as recovered by the Reformers, they would anticipate, as probable, some freedom of expression, on particular points.

It is due, as well to those who honoured the Lecturer with their attendance, as to his friends of the "London City Mission," to state distinctly that, in revising the Lectures for the press, he has not merely made many verbal corrections, but has introduced more than a few passages tending, as he hopes, to strengthen or illustrate his argument; and it is among these added passages that will be found the more distinct expressions of his individual

views on points connected with the present aspect of our English Christianity.

It can scarcely be necessary to forewarn the reader not to look, in these Lectures, either for a systematic digest of Theology, or for a formal biblical argument, in support of the several articles of an evangelic creed. The Lecturer has not thought himself qualified to undertake any such task; nor would any endeavour of the kind have consisted with the professed intention of the Lectures, which were projected with the hope of directing the attention of well-educated persons to the great principles of the Gospel; and especially as at this moment put in jeopardy by the wide diffusion of opinions which would substitute the “vain inventions” of antiquity, for the purity and simplicity of apostolic Christianity.

Making no pretensions therefore to speak as a master of theology, the Lecturer has ventured, as

he supposes a private Christian may do without blame, and especially if his years have been devoted to religious studies—to present some broad views of those principal articles of belief, in the truth and import of which all Christians are alike concerned.

STANFORD RIVERS,

*April, 1841.*

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THE  
FIRST LECTURE.

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ON THE EXTERIOR CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL  
CHRISTIANITY.



ON

SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY.

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FIRST LECTURE.

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THERE may be those who, in comparing the physical, or even the moral condition of civilized and of barbarous nations, would give the preference to the latter; alleging that, on the whole, more enjoyment is secured, and less suffering entailed by a lower, than by a more advanced development of the social system. But let such a question be determined as it may, yet is it certain that, except as the consequence of national catastrophes, sudden or slow in their operation, no community recedes from the position it has reached; or, by a voluntary act, renounces knowledge and the arts, and embraces barbarism.

Advancement, which is the Law, as well of the human mind, individually, as of the social system, forbids a deliberate return to what is more simple, after what is more complex has once been attained; for, to step back on its path, would imply that a

people should not merely cease to desire what they have learned to enjoy ; but that they should consent no longer to know, what they had ascertained to be true ; and should learn to believe as true, what they have discovered to be false ; and should persuade themselves to act in a manner which experience has taught them is equally absurd and mischievous. Even therefore if savage life did present itself to the view of a civilized people as a paradise ; yet between it and themselves there is interposed a gulf, into which, indeed, many a nation has been plunged headlong, but which none can pass by spontaneous movement.

There may too be those, and perhaps they are more than a few, who, knowing little of Christianity except in its incidental connexion with secular affairs, over which it too often throws perplexity ;—knowing nothing of its truth, or its energies, or its beauty ; and not knowing, or not considering, that every other form of religion is utterly destitute as well of truth, as of any power to bless, imagine that an equitable comparison between the religion of Europe, and the religions of Asia, would exhibit but an ambiguous advantage in favour of the former. Or such persons may persuade themselves that an innocuous pantheism, upon the bosom of which all consciences might be lulled, would indeed be a happy exchange for the stirring verities of the Bible.

Yet even if it were so, no such exchange can ever be offered to our choice ; for Christianity, like civilization, and in a much deeper sense, is a movement forward. Christianity is a system of truths which has

carried the human mind as far in advance of ancient philosophy, as it has of false religion. It is no scheme of vague opinions, which may be indifferently refuted, or admitted ; but a progress in abstract truth—and a progress in moral sentiment—and a progress in manners, which, though its future course may be arrested by calamities falling upon the human family, could not be freely renounced but by an act of desperation, fatal to the social existence of the people that should attempt it.

Christianity is a development, and the only development ever yet given, of those higher faculties of human nature, which although they may long slumber, yet when once awakened, will not be curbed by the limitations of time ;—they will not ; for their scope lies far forward in the field of Eternity.

Christianity, like civilization, may be overborne at different points, or turned from its course ; but it must recover its lost ground. It is a guardian power, which has long been carrying the human family, as in its bosom, over a rugged road, and beneath inclement skies ; but will not be stayed until it have fulfilled its trust.

We grant indeed that a general decay of religious belief, throughout Europe, is an event which does not want some indications of probability. But if we suppose it to have taken place, its visible effects would every where be those of *a turn of tide* ; or the reflux of a deep current, heretofore setting heavenward (how stormy soever may have been its surface, or sluggish its movement). It would be a reflux towards



whatever is sensual, selfish, frivolous, and ferocious. Like the loss of civilization—the loss of Christianity would be equivalent to a ceasing to know, a ceasing to feel, a ceasing, in the best sense, to live ; or the living on a principle confessedly earthly, after a higher principle has been recognised.

At this moment the hold of Christianity upon the convictions, the moral sentiments, and the manners of several of the nations, called Christian, is in the last degree feeble ; nevertheless, so long as, even in such countries, the Gospel is yet publicly regarded as true, and so long as its decisions are appealed to as of divine authority, the community, low as it may have sunk in virtue, has still its eye directed upward toward that which is purer and more elevated, as well in faith as in morals, than any thing else around it. Even, therefore, to such communities, the ceasing to be Christian would not be the coming to a stand merely ; but the commencement of a descent towards an abyss.

But to a community within which the Gospel has widely diffused itself through the opinions, habits, and affections of the mass, and in which it intensely affects the moral energies of thousands ; the ceasing to be Christian would be a dissolution, political, social, domestic : it would be—national death.

In this country every institution which at once fortifies and adorns our social condition, has been constructed on the supposition of a flow and pressure in this one direction ;—that is to say, toward whatever is, or is assumed to be, true in religion, and pure



in morals :—every slope in the basement of the political building is adapted to this, and to no other movement of the waters :—should they turn, there is not an embankment which must not yield, and add its fragments to the general ruin.

Throughout southern Europe, where an almost stagnant neap-tide of moral feeling has for ages covered the surface of society, the turn toward open Atheism might show itself only in the drooping of heads, this way, instead of that, upon ecclesiastical levels ; but it could not be so in England. England, and her affluence at home, and her influence through the world, and her bright cluster of ancient honours ; England, and her pure domestic affections, and home felicity, and her generous temper, and her wide philanthropy ; England, her power and her embellishments, we may be assured—is fated along with the Gospel.—The waters of the sanctuary stand breast high around her, and should they fall off, she herself falls, to rise no more.

In this, if in no other country, Christianity, much as it is dishonoured, yet rules in theology, and is the standard of morals, and gives sanction to law ; and, as an arbiter, acknowledged by all, mediates between angry factions. But more than this, it is by far the most profound of the forces now at work within the social system ;—it is a force not controllable by any secular, or ordinary means, inasmuch as, for the sake of it, thousands amongst us, if challenged to do so, would relinquish goods, and life itself. Amid our very agitations it still consolidates its power ; and even

spurious zeal, (if there be any) breaks up the ground for its advances. Atheism itself has lately strengthened it by a reaction; while the sudden, and unlooked for revival, in our times, of ancient superstitions, directs a new attention to its simple truths. Christianity comes to our times as the survivor of all systems, and after confronting, in turn, every imaginable form of error, each of which has gone to its almost forgotten place in history—itself alone lives.

In philosophic scorn we may turn from the perusal of the history of Christianity, during its eighteen centuries past, blessing ourselves in a thence-derived indifference towards all religion. But feelings such as these spring from modes of thinking that are loose and unphilosophical. What we should discern in the course of events, on the stage of European affairs, during this lapse of time, is—not so much a series of interested frauds, of imbecile illusions, of fanatical violences, borrowing a sanction from religion; but rather a slow movement, of vast compass, yet tending always towards a high moral end, however remote, and which higher end it is now visibly approaching. We have before us, in this history, a power which, even when most enfeebled or perverted, could lend a grandeur even to folly, and a sublimity to extravagance; which has often imparted the energies of virtue to crimes; which has never visited mankind with a scourge, without bringing up a blessing; and which now at length stands forward in no other character than as the reprover of violence, and of oppression, and of impurity; and as the guardian of whatever is most

holy and happy. Its spirit and tendency, which once might seem ambiguous, are now, by universal acknowledgment, simply benign.

But we are still reminded of the errors, or, to use the objector's own word, the inconsistencies of Christians, even in these times, when, as we allege, our religion has recovered, in great measure, its pristine purity. Yet justly interpreted, this charge conveys the objector's own latent feeling, that Christianity is, what we are affirming it to be, an idea of perfection, which is in progress to exhibit its perfect symmetry. The objector means to say that, should the time ever come when the religion of Christ shall have mastered whatever now opposes its influence, and shall reign triumphant, in its own splendour, all men will have reached, under its guidance, a high stage of moral excellence. The objector means to say that, should he survive to so happy a day, he himself, urged forward in the general movement, will have become wise.

The same momentous fact, namely, That the moral energies of the Gospel are, in great part, yet to be developed, indirectly attested as it is even by its opponents, is most cordially admitted by its friends; who individually acknowledge, with humiliation, their personal falling short of the rule of their profession. Or, if we listen to those whose office it is to urge this rule upon others, evidence to the same effect is every day borne by all; for every pulpit exhortation, every didactic treatise, every urgent appeal made to the Christian community, as such; and every incitement to zeal and diligence in works of charity,



speaks the same language, and attests the deep conviction of each Christian bosom, that the heavenward impulses of the Gospel are in progress, only, towards their consummation in the virtue and happiness of mankind.

What then are the genuine elements of this power, which, by the confession of all, is carrying forward the social system towards goodness and felicity? WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

In the present instance we have consented to employ a compound phrase, and are to speak of *Spiritual* Christianity.—Have we then in view certain refinements upon the broad principles of the Gospel? Or is it our purpose to recommend some scheme of piety, elaborately imagined, and delicately framed, and eligible for the few, and barely to be understood even by them? Indeed it is not.—We have no such purpose. We are not instructed to be the expositors or champions of partial notions, or of private conceits, or of fond peculiarities, or of mystifications; or of anything that does not lie clearly upon the surface of the inspired pages. We are of no party; we yield undue homage to no names; we have no unconfessed solicitudes, no indirect purposes; we challenge for our faith and doctrine CATHOLICITY, in the highest and best sense which that abused word may bear.

By *Spiritual* Christianity, therefore, we mean nothing more, (and we can mean nothing less) than—Christianity itself: Christianity in its simplicity, in its grandeur, in its integrity, in its beauty. Christianity, as it is truth absolute, truth eternal, truth of

infinite moment to every man, and intelligible to every man.

In proof of the breadth of the view which we mean to take of the Gospel, we bind ourselves to ask for no practical concessions in behalf of Spiritual Christianity which may not be demanded, as a necessary inference from some one of the principles that, without a doubt, are its visible characteristics. We inquire then what these visible characteristics are?

## I.

In reply, We say FIRST, that CHRISTIANITY IS A RELIGION OF FACTS; and we use the term in its plain historic sense. Christianity touches the affections, and binds the consciences of men, on no other plea than that of its being a declaration of facts; and these, either long past, or now passing; or certainly anticipated as yet impending.

We have not therefore before us either a theory of abstract principles, or a system of sentiments, selected as excellent and refined, from among other eligible modes of feeling. We have not to do with a congeries of the best things of all systems, or with a convenient summary of the product of the wisdom of all times. We have not to recommend a rule for those who may think good to adopt it. We have before us nothing but a series of facts, and the just consequences of those facts. Christianity is historically true—it is true in its own sense; or it can have no claim upon our serious regard; and if, in vindicating

the high claim it advances, we cannot maintain our position on open ground, accessible to all minds, we fail by our own showing; or, rather let it be said that, irrespective of the ability, or the want of ability, of any single advocate of christian principles, the Gospel demands our submission, purely ON THE GROUND OF ITS HISTORIC TRUTH.

### IS THEN CHRISTIANITY HISTORICALLY TRUE?

In the present instance we do not hold ourselves obliged to undertake an argument so often, and so conclusively conducted; but rather we suppose ourselves entitled to assume this as granted; nevertheless, we must, for a moment, trace a single line of connexion between the historical truth of the Gospel, and those principles of our moral nature, to which an appeal is necessarily made in asserting the reality of spiritual religion.

What is it then which the question concerning the truth of Christianity supposes to be doubtful; or what is it which can be regarded as open to argument among those who are at once well informed, and candid?—Not the actual existence of Christianity, as a visible institute, up through the course of time, from the present age to that of the Julian Cæsars. Nothing within the range of history—nothing mathematically demonstrated, is more certain than is the series of facts to which we now refer. Thus far then, we presume, there can be no controversy, or none amongst educated persons. Let church history be



what it may in its qualities, assuredly *it is history*—and this, close up to the moment of its alleged origination.\*

What then is it that may be further questionable? Is it the antiquity and genuineness of the literary remains comprised in the canon of the New Testament? If there be indeed room for reasonable controversy on this ground, the demur, be it what it may, must be dealt with, not in the mass; but in detail; not in the mode of vague suppositions; but in that of a rigorous attention to every particle of the evidence, as severally bearing upon each separate portion of the document;—upon each book, each epistle, each paragraph, sentence, word, syllable, letter. There is no summary process by means of which a controversy like this may be disposed of. The question, if indeed there be a question, is one of historical criticism; and is to be determined in no other manner than by a diligent application of the rules of that now well-digested science.

Nor can it be necessary to remind well-informed persons, that the legitimate deductions of one science are not to be overruled by sidelong inferences, derived from another. The question being—whether Cæsar's Commentaries are indeed Cæsar's; we are not to be told, as a sufficient reply, that the newest discoveries in human physiology, or that recent experiments in

\* The testimony of the Roman historian, to this effect, is by none called in question. Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperante, per Procuratorem Pontium Pilatum, supplicio affectus erat. Tac. An. XV.

chemistry, or that a doctrine derived, yesterday, from an excavation, does not favour the affirmative? Nothing can be more impertinent or unphilosophical than intrusions of this sort.\*

But if there *be* a question concerning the antiquity or genuineness of any portion of the New Testament, the well-informed Christian will be the most eager to provoke, and the most assiduous in prosecuting the inquiry; and if there are any who wish to evade it, it must be either the ill-informed Christian, or the too well informed infidel.

But it is said that "this critical argument in support of the antiquity and genuineness of the several portions of the New Testament, is too recondite to be appreciable by the majority, even of well educated persons."—Is it so?—then it keeps company with the entire circle of the modern sciences, whether abstract or physical.

Even in an assembly of well-educated persons, there are not many who would profess themselves to be competent to follow, intelligently, the demonstration which establishes the mechanism of the heavens, as now constituting the creed of Astronomy. Beyond

\* But if, on grounds of philosophical justice, we thus protest against the interference of the physical or physiological sciences with the historical evidences of Christianity; the very same doctrine, must in all equity, be held to condemn the ill-considered zeal of those who, from mistaken religious motives, would fain interdict the advances of science, even when confining itself to its own ground, and when employing methods altogether unexceptionable. Those who have indeed made themselves familiar with the historic proof of Christianity, will be exempt from all solicitude as to the ultimate conclusions of Geology, or of any other science.

the walls of colleges, every thing in science is taken on trust; and it is very safely so taken; for all well know, that the professors of science, in these times, mystify nothing; and offer satisfactory proof in support of whatever they affirm. Although there be few, in fact, who tread the paths of philosophy, there is neither bar at the entrance, nor labyrinth midway in the course. It should be remembered that, just in proportion as the results of modern science have become unquestionably certain, the *proof* of that certainty has become the more recondite, and so as to be fully intelligible only to those who devote their lives to the pursuit.

So it is likewise on the field of historical criticism; and precisely because the methods of proof now resorted to, are wide in their range, various in their elements, and rigidly exact in their inductions;—it is because they are certain, that they are also difficult; it is because they are circumstantially strong, nay, irrefragable, that they demand powers of attention severely disciplined, and many accomplishments, in those who would follow them through their ample circuits.

We affirm then, that which will not be disputed by any who are competent to call it in question, that, in the authentic methods of historical criticism, rigorously and laboriously applied to the Christian documents, and to every separate portion of them (a very few passages or phrases being excepted) the genuineness of the books of the New Testament has, in our own times, been placed far beyond the reach



of all reasonable doubt. How difficult soever, or even impracticable it may be to render this sort of evidence fully intelligible to the imperfectly informed, no well educated person can feel a serious difficulty in yielding his absolute assent to it.

Here then we set our foot upon a rock. But let it be well observed that, while the proof, could it be produced, of the spuriousness of one or more passages, or even of ample portions of the received canon, would leave the Christian argument untouched, in the main ; on the contrary, unquestionable proof of the genuineness of any one considerable portion of that canon, would carry the whole weight of Christianity ; for such an attested portion could not be made to consist with the hypothesis of infidelity.

To rid the world therefore, as the infidel might wish to do, of the Evangelic history, each of the Gospels, separately, and each of the Epistles, separately, must be proved to be spurious. One of the Gospels would save our religion ; or a single apostolic Epistle, like a morning star alone in the skies, when all other stars are obscured, would redeem the world from the darkness of Atheism.

But if the books be genuine ; what is it further which may reasonably be doubted ? Instead of opening an extensive argument which has so often and so conclusively been handled, we shall confine ourselves to considerations proper to our peculiar subject. We are then to speak of Spiritual Christianity, and to insist upon modes of feeling of a

kind to raise us above the low levels of frivolous pleasure, or of sordid secular avocations. By the very necessity of our subject therefore, we must make a frequent appeal to the MORAL SENSE, and must suppose, in the hearer, not merely conscience and candour; but the sensibilities and instincts of a well-ordered mind, alive, in some degree, to the sympathies of virtue. We are not professing to address those who have lived in too constant familiarity with what is gross or selfish, to allow the moral faculties to have retained their genuine force.

Yet let it not hence be inferred that our argument is itself a refinement, not intelligible except to those whose mental qualifications are peculiar. A vivid moral sense, and a just taste, even if they be rare in fact, are so, not because factitious; but because in too many they have become blunted by a course of life, unfavourable to their exercise. Nor do we address ourselves to a fine discriminating moral faculty, as contradistinguished from the rude, yet native impressions of uncultivated minds, and which would at once admit all that we are now to ask; but rather as opposed to that which itself is opposed to nature, and to truth of feeling.

A correct moral feeling, under the guidance of which he who possesses it makes his way with certainty through the labyrinths of a crowded, sophisticated world, choosing, by its aid, his friend—his colleague, his agent, with a seldom-baffled tact, and holding himself at the distance of civility from many against whom he could bring no accusation—

this feeling, and this taste, the *antennæ* of the mind, are as applicable to the persons of history, as to the persons of the present moment ; or to such of them, at least, as have become known to us, not through the artificial medium of rhetorical eulogies, but by the reports of unconnected contemporaries, who have related, as by accident, the less as well as the more important incidents of their private life, and have repeated, perhaps with little skill as to the selection, their conversations, and discourses. Brought to bear on such instances, the moral sense and taste,—or the instinctive feeling of what is true in human nature, and of what is harmonious and consistent with itself—are less fallible, we may boldly say, than direct reasoning, even of the severest sort ; for in our reasonings, a false step, at the commencement, sends us far astray ; but as to the inductions of the moral sense, in gathering them up, we are feeling our path as we proceed, and at every step we get so much the nearer to truth and certainty. Logic takes us on a circuit, which, if the course be but correctly calculated, brings us round to a legitimate conclusion. But the method of induction by the tact of the moral sense, is a walking with nature, on a day's journey ; and a making ourselves familiar with the sweet tones of her voice in a lengthened communion.

We should however well observe the separate offices of the logic of critical evidence, and of the logic of the moral sense, as applied to the discrimination of the genuine and the spurious in history. Thus, in the instance before us, it belongs to the



former, embracing the science of criticism as a subsidiary means, to trace, in the original records of Christianity—in their varied style, in their phrases, proper to the time, country, and writers—in their incidental allusions to persons, events, and usages—in their internal agreements, and not less, in their disagreements, the infallible marks of authenticity. Nor does any thing remain to be desired in the way of proof, in this line, which may not be found in many conclusive modern works.

It is the office, moreover, of the historical logic, as applied to the Christian evidences, to show (and which may most certainly be done) that the memoirs of Christ have been derived from, at the least, three independent sources; and therefore, that the supposition, could it otherwise for a moment be entertained, of an imaginative creation of this altogether singular narrative, is totally excluded.

The same species of argument, moreover, will exhibit the manifest incompetency of the writers of the Gospels—one and all, for the task of a literary creation; and their competency for that only of furnishing an inartificial report of incidents and discourses.

So far, a strict analysis of the entire mass of the evidence, and of the minute circumstances which attach to it, excludes every doubt that the evangelic history is—HISTORY.

But now, after these rigorous methods of analysis have done their part, something remains which,



in fact, if it can be satisfactorily achieved, carries conviction home to the mind in a manner not often if ever effected by a merely critical argument.

We summon then to our aid, those powers of perception which, even if they cannot clothe themselves in words, and therefore cannot be conveyed distinctly from mind to mind, are not therefore the less to be relied upon. Yet let us not be misunderstood; nor let it for a moment be supposed that we are so forgetful of the principles of Spiritual Christianity, hereafter to be affirmed, as to attempt to hale things divine to the tribunal of the perverted moral perceptions of the human mind. This we are not doing; but are only endeavouring to bring the moral sense to bear upon objects which lie altogether within its proper range;—that is to say, upon human character, human conduct, and upon the well-known harmonies of the world of mind, as exposed to our view in others, or as presented by our personal consciousness.

Moreover we do not hesitate to ask, that such faint conceptions as the human mind may of itself entertain, of the bright excellence of a better world, should be at hand, and give their testimony, so far as they may, in support of our conclusions; for it has ever been held that, if the spotless virtue of heaven were to appear upon earth, she would be recognised and revered, even by the most abject, or the most perverted of mankind.

Read then the Gospels, simply as historical memoirs: and by such aids as they alone supply, make

yourself acquainted with Him who is the subject of these narrations. Bring the individual conception, as distinctly as possible before the mind:—allow the moral sense to confer, in its own manner, and at leisure, with this unusual form of humanity.—“Behold the man”—even the Saviour of the world, and say whether it be not historic truth that is before the eye. The more peculiar is this form, yet withal symmetrical, the more infallible is the impression of reality we thence receive. What we have to do with in this instance, is not an undefined ideal of wisdom and goodness, conveyed in round affirmations, or in eulogies; but with a self-developed individuality, in conveying which the writers of the narrative do not appear. In this instance, if in any, the medium is transparent: nothing intervenes between the reader and the personage of the history, in whose presence we stand, as if not separated by time and space.

It may be questioned whether the entire range of *ancient* history presents any one character in colours of reality so fresh as those which distinguish the personage of the evangelic memoirs. The sages and heroes of antiquity—less and less nearly related, as they must be, to any living interests, are fading amid the mists of an obsolete world: but He who “is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” is offered to the view of mankind, in the dyes of immortality, fitting a history, which, instead of losing the intensity of its import, is gathering weight by the lapse of time.

The Evangelists, by the translucency of their style,

have given a lesson in biographical composition, showing how perfectly individual character may be expressed in a method which disdains every rule but that of fidelity. It is personal humanity, in the presence of which we stand, while perusing the Gospels, and to each reader, apart, if serious and ingenuous, and yet incredulous, the Saviour of the world addresses a mild reproof—"It is I.—Behold my hands and my feet:—Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." And can we do otherwise than grant, all that is now demanded—namely, That the Evangelists record the actions and discourses of a real person?

It is well to consider the extraordinary contrasts that are yet perfectly harmonized in the personal character of Christ.

At a first glance, he appears always in his own garb of humility;—lowliness of demeanour is his very characteristic. But we must not forget that this lowliness was combined with nothing less than a solemnly proclaimed, and peremptory challenge of rightful headship over the human race! Nevertheless the oneness of the character—the fair perfection of the surface, suffers no rent by this blending of elements so strangely diverse. Let us then bring before the mind, with all the distinctness we can, the conception of the Teacher, more meek than any who has ever assumed to rule the opinions of mankind, and who yet, in the tones proper to tranquil modesty, and as conscious at once of power and right, anticipates that day of wonder, when, "the KING shall sit



on the throne of his glory," with his angels attendant; and when "all nations shall be gathered before him," from his lips to receive their doom! The more these elements of personal character are disproportionate, the more convincing is the proof of reality, which arises from their harmony.

We may read the Evangelists listlessly, and not perceive this evidence; but we can never read them intelligently without yielding to it our convictions.

If the character of Christ be, as indeed it is, altogether unmatched, in the circle of history, it is even less so by the singularity of the intellectual and moral elements which it combines, than by the sweetness and perfection which result from their union. This will appear the more, if we consider those instances in which the combination was altogether of an unprecedented kind.

Nothing has been more constant in the history of the human mind, whenever the religious emotions have gained a supremacy over the sensual and sordid passions, than the breaking out of the ascetic temper in some of its forms; and most often in that which disguises virtue, now as a spectre, now as a maniac, now as a mendicant, now as a slave, but never as the bright daughter of heaven. Of the three Jewish sects, extant in our Lord's time, two of them—that is to say the two that made pretensions to any sort of piety, had assumed the ascetic garb, in its two customary species—the philosophic (the Essenes) and the fanatical (the Pharisees); and so strong and uniform is

this crabbed inclination, that Christianity itself, in violent contrariety to its spirit and its precepts, went off into the ascetic temper, within a century after the close of the apostolic age, or even earlier.

Under this aspect then, let us for a moment consider the absolutely novel phenomenon of the Teacher of a far purer morality than the world had heretofore ever listened to; yet himself affecting no singularities in his modes of living. The superiority of the soul to the body, was the very purport of his doctrine; and yet he did not waste the body by any austerities! The duty of self-denial he perpetually enforced; and yet he practised no factitious mortifications! This Teacher, not of abstinence but of virtue; this Re-prover, not of enjoyment, but of vice, himself went in and out among the social amenities of ordinary life with so unsolicitous a freedom, as to give colour to the malice of hypocrisy, in pointing the finger at him, saying—"Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber; a friend (companion) of publicans and sinners!" Should we not then note this singular apposition and harmony of qualities—that he who was familiar with the festivities of heaven, did not any more disdain the poor solaces of mortality, than disregard its transient pains and woes? Follow this same Jesus from the banquets of the opulent, where he showed no scruples in diet, to the highways and wildernesses of Judea, where, never indifferent to human sufferings, he healed—"as many as came unto him."

These remarkable features in the personal cha-

racter of Christ have often, and very properly been adduced, as instances of the unrivalled wisdom and elevation, which mark him as preeminent among the wise and good.

It is not however for this purpose that we now refer to them ; but rather as harmonies, altogether inimitable, and which put beyond doubt the historic reality of the Person. Thus considered, they must be admitted by calm minds as carrying the truth of Christianity itself. "

There are however those who will readily grant us, what indeed they cannot, with any appearance of candour deny—the historic reality of the person of Christ, and the more-than-human excellence which his behaviour and discourses embody ; but at this point they declare that they must stop. Let such persons see to it :—they cannot stop at this point ; for just at this point there is no ground on which foot may stand.

—What are the facts ?

—The inimitable characteristics of nature attach to what we may call the common incidents of the evangelic history, and in which Jesus of Nazareth is seen mingling himself with the ordinary course of social life. But is it true that these characteristics suddenly, and in each instance, disappear when the same person is presented to us walking on another, and a high path—namely, that of supernatural power ? IT IS NOT SO, and on the contrary, very many of the most peculiar and infallible of those touches of tenderness and pathos which so generally mark the



evangelic narrative, belong precisely to the supernatural portions of it, and are inseparably connected with acts of miraculous beneficence. We ask that the Gospels be read with the utmost severity of criticism, and with this especial object in view, namely—to inquire—Whether those indications of reality which have already been yielded to as irresistible evidences of truth, do not belong as fully to the supernatural, as they do to the ordinary incidents of the Gospels? or in other words, whether, unless we resolve to overrule the question by a previous determination, any ground of simply historic distinction presents itself, marking off the supernatural from the ordinary events of the evangelic narratives?

If we feel ourselves to be conversing with historic truth, as well as with heavenly wisdom, when Jesus is before us, seated on the mountain brow, and delivering the Beatitudes to his disciples; is it so that the colours become confused, and the contour of the figures unreal, when the same personage, in the midst of thousands, seated by fifties on the grassy slope, supplies the hunger of the multitude by the word of his power? Is it historic truth that is presented when the fearless Teacher of a just morality convicts the Rabbis of folly and perversity; and less so when, turning from his envious opponents, he says to the paralytic—“Take up thy bed and walk?” Nature herself is before us when the repentant woman, after washing the Lord’s feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, sits contrasted with the obdurate and uncourteous Pharisee:—But the very same bright



forms of reality mark the scene when Jesus, filled with compassion at the sight of a mother's woe, stays the bier, and renders her son alive to her bosom.

Or, if we turn to those portions of the Gospels in which the incidents are narrated more in detail, and where a greater variety of persons is introduced, and where therefore the supposition of fabrication is the more peremptorily excluded, it is found that the supernatural and the ordinary elements are in no way to be distinguished in respect of the simple vivacity with which both present themselves to the eye. The evangelic narrative offers the same bright translucency—the same serenity, and the same precision, in reporting the most astounding, as the most familiar occurrences. It is like a smooth-surfaced river which, in holding its course through a varied country, reflects from its bosom, at one moment the amenities of a homely border, and at the next the summits of the Alps, and both with the same unruffled fidelity.

As the subject of a rigorous historic criticism, and all hypothetical opinions being excluded, no pretext whatever presents itself for drawing a line around the supernatural portions of the Gospels, as if they were of suspicious aspect, and differed from the context in historic verisimilitude. Without violence done to the rules of criticism, we cannot detach the miraculous portions of the history, and then put together the mutilated portions, so as to consist with the undoubted reality of the part which is retained.

Or take the narrative of the raising of Lazarus of Bethany. A brilliant vividness, as when a sunbeam breaks from between clouds, illumines this unmatched history;—and it rests with equal intensity upon the stupendous miracle, and upon the beauty and grace of the scene of domestic sorrow. If we follow Martha and Mary from the house to the spot where they meet their friend, and give a half-utterance to their confidence in his power; at what step—let us distinctly determine—at what step, as the group proceeds towards the sepulchre, shall we halt and refuse to accompany it? Where is the break in the story, or the point of transition; and where does history finish, and the spurious portion commence? Is it when we approach the cave's mouth that the gestures of the persons become unreal, and the language untrue to nature? Where is it that the indications of tenderness and majesty disappear?—at the moment when Jesus weeps; or when he invokes his Father; or when, with a voice which echoes in Hades, he challenges the dead to come forth; or is it when “he who was dead,” obeys this bidding?

We affirm that, on no principles which a sound mind can approve, is it *possible*, either to deny the reality of the natural portions of this narrative, or to sever these from the supernatural. But this is not enough; for it might be in fact more easy to offer some intelligible solution of the difficulty attaching to the supposition that the Gospels are not true, in respect of the ordinary, than of the extraordinary portion of their materials. If we were to allow it to be possible

(which it is not) that writers showing so little inventive or plastic power, as do Matthew the Publican, and John of Galilee, should, with the harmony of truth, have carried their imaginary Master through the *common* acts and incidents of his course; never could they, no, nor writers the most accomplished, have brought him, in modest simplicity, through the *miraculous* acts of that course. Desperate must be the endeavour to show that, while the ordinary events of the Gospel must be admitted as true, the extraordinary are incredible. On the contrary, it would be to the former, if to any, that a suspicion might attach;—for, as to the latter, they cannot but be true: if not true, whence are they?

The scepticism, equally condemned as it is by historical logic and by the moral sense, which allows the natural, and disallows the supernatural portion of the history of Christ, is absolutely excluded when we compare, in the four Gospels, separately, the narrative of what precedes the resurrection, with the closing portions, which bring the crucified Jesus again among his disciples.

If those portions of the evangelic history which reach to the moment of the death of Christ, are, in a critical sense, of the same historic quality as those which run on to the moment of his ascension, and if the former absolutely command our assent—if they carry it as by force, then, by a most direct inference, “is Christ risen indeed,” and become the first fruits of immortality to the human race. Then is it true that, “as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be



made alive." No narrative is anywhere extant comparable to that of the days and hours immediately preceding the crucifixion; and the several accounts of the hurried events of those days present the minute discordancies which are always found to belong to genuine memoirs, compiled by eye-witnesses.

The last supper and its sublime discourses; the agony in the garden, the behaviour of the traitor, the scenes in the hall of the chief priest, and before the judgment seat of the Roman procurator—and in the Palace of Herod, and in the place called the Pavement, and on the way from the city;—and the scene on Calvary, are true—if anything in the compass of history be true.

But now—if our moral perceptions are, in this way, to be listened to, not less incontestably real are the closing chapters of the four Gospels, in which we find the same sobriety and the same vivacity; the same distinctness, and the same freshness; the same pathos, and the same wisdom, and the same majesty; and yet all chastened by the recollected sorrows of a terrible conflict just passed, and mellowed with the glow of a triumph at hand.

Let it be imagined that writers such as the evangelists, might have led their master as far as to Calvary; but could they, unless truth had been before them, have reproduced him from the sepulchre? What abruptness, harshness, extravagance, what want of harmony, would have been presented in the closing chapters of the Gospels, if the same Jesus had not

supplied the writers with their materials, by going in and out among them after his resurrection !

On the supposition that Christ did not rise from the dead, let any one whose moral tastes are not entirely blunted, read the narrative of his encounter with Mary in the garden, and with his disciples in the inner chamber, and again on the shore of the Lake ; let him study the perfect simplicity and yet the warmth of the interview with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. The better taste of modern times, and the just sense of what is true in sentiment, and pure in composition, give us an advantage in an analysis of this sort. Guided, then, by the instincts of the most severe taste, let us spread before us the final portion of the Gospel of Luke ;—namely, the twenty-fourth chapter, which reports a selection of the events occurring between the early morning of the first day of the week, and that moment of wonder when, starting from the world he had ransomed, the Saviour returned whence he had come. Will any one who is acquainted with antiquity affirm that any writer, Greek, Roman, or Barbarian, has come down to us, whom we can believe capable of conceiving at all of such a style of incident or discourse ; or who, had he conceived it, could have conveyed his conception in a style so chaste, natural, calm, lucid, pure ? Nothing like this narrative is contained in all the circle of fiction, and nothing equal to it in all the circle of history ; and yet nothing is more perfectly consonant with the harmonies of nature. We may listlessly peruse this

page, each line of which wakens a sympathy in every bosom which itself responds to truth. But if we ponder it—if we allow the mind to grasp the several objects, we are vanquished by the conviction that all is real.—But if real, and if Christ be risen indeed, then is Christianity indeed A RELIGION OF FACTS; and then are we fully entitled to a bold affirmation, and urgent use of whatever inferences may thence be fairly deduced.

Acute minds will not be slow to discern, as in perspective before them, the train of those inferences which we shall feel ourselves at liberty to deduce from the admission that Christianity *is historically true*. This admission cannot, we are sure, be withheld; and yet let it not be made with a reserved intention to evade the consequences. What are they?—They are such as embrace the personal well-being of every one; for, if Christianity *be* a history, it is a history still in full progress; it is a history running on, far beyond the dim horizon of human hopes and fears.

But it is said, all this, at the best, *is moral evidence only*; and those who are conversant with mathematical demonstrations, and with the rigorous methods of physical science, must not be required to yield their convictions easily *to mere moral evidence*.

We ask, have those who are accustomed thus to speak, actually considered the import of their objection; or inquired what are the consequences it involves, if valid? We believe not; and we think so, because the very terms are destitute of logical mean-



ing; or imply, if a meaning be assigned to them, a palpable absurdity.

If, for a moment, we grant an intelligible meaning to the objection as stated, and consent to understand the terms in which it is conveyed, as they are often used, then we affirm—That some portion of even the abstract sciences is less certain than are very many things established by what is called moral evidence—That a large amount of what is accredited as probably true within the circle of the physical and mixed sciences *is immeasurably inferior* in certainty to much which rests upon moral evidence:—and further—That so far from its being reasonable to reject this species of evidence, the mere circumstance of a man's being known to distrust it in the conduct of his daily affairs, would be held to justify, in his case, a commission of lunacy.

No supposition can be more inaccurate than that which assumes the three kinds of proof, *mathematical*, *physical*, and *moral*, to range, one beneath the other, in a regular gradation of certainty;—as if the mathematical were in all cases absolute; the physical a degree lower, or, as to its results, in some degree, and always, less certain than those of the first; and by consequence the third, being inferior to the second, necessarily far inferior to the first; and therefore, always much less certain than that which alone deserves to be spoken of as *certain*; and in fact barely trustworthy in any case.

Any such distribution of the kinds of proof is mere confusion; illogical abstractedly, and involving con-



sequences, which, if acted upon, would appear ridiculously absurd.

It is indeed true, that the three great classes of facts—the *universal*, or absolute—(mathematical and metaphysical)—the *general* or physical—and the *individual* (forensic and historical) are pursued and ascertained by three corresponding methods—or, as they might be called—three logics. But it is far from being true that the three species of reasoning hold an *exclusive* authority, or sole jurisdiction, over the three classes of facts above mentioned. Throughout the physical sciences, the mathematical logic is perpetually resorted to; while, even within the range of the mathematical, the physical is, once and again, brought in as an aid. But if we turn to the *historical and forensic* department of facts, the three methods are so blended in the establishment of them, that, to separate them altogether is impracticable; and as to *moral* evidence, if we use the phrase in any intelligible sense, it does but give its aid, at times, on this ground; and even then the conclusions to which it leads rest upon inductions which are physical, rather than moral.

The conduct of a complicated historical, or forensic argument concerning individual facts, resembles the manipulations of an adroit workman, who, having some nice operation in progress, lays down one tool, and snatches up another, and then another, according to the momentary exigencies of his task.

That sort of evidence may properly be called *moral*, which appeals to the moral sense, and in assenting to

which, as we often do with an irresistible conviction, we are unable, with any precision, to convey to another mind the grounds of our firm belief. It is thus, often, that we estimate the veracity of a witness, or judge of the reality or spuriousness of a written narrative. But then even this sort of evidence, when nicely analyzed, resolves itself into physical principles. What are these convictions, which we find it impossible to clothe in words, but the results, in our minds, of slow, involuntary inductions concerning moral qualities, and which, inasmuch as they are peculiarly exact, are not to be transfused into a medium so vague and faulty as is language, at the best.

As to the mass of history, by far the larger portion of it rests, in no proper sense, upon *moral* evidence. To a portion the mathematical doctrine of probabilities applies;—for it may be as a million to one, that an alleged fact, under all the circumstances, is true. But the proof of the larger portion resolves itself into our knowledge of the laws of the material world, and of those of the world of mind. A portion also is conclusively established by a minute scrutiny of its agreement with that intricate combination of small events which makes up the course of human affairs.

Every *real* transaction, especially those which flow on through a course of time, touches this web-work of small events at many points, and is woven into its very substance. Fiction may indeed paint its personages so as for a moment to deceive the eye;

—but it has never succeeded in the attempt to foist its factitious embroideries upon the tapestry of truth.

We might take as an instance, that irresistible book in which Paley has established the truth of the personal history of St. Paul.\* It is throughout a tracing of the thousand fibres by which a long series of events connects itself with the warp and woof of human affairs. To apply to evidence of this sort, the besom of scepticism, and sweepingly to remove it as consisting only in *moral evidence*, is an amazing instance of confusion of mind.

It is often loosely affirmed that history rests mainly upon moral evidence. Is then a roman camp moral evidence? Or is a roman road moral evidence? Or are these and many other facts, when appealed to as proof of the assertion that, in a remote age, the Romans held military occupation of Britain, moral evidence? If they be, then we affirm that, when complete in its kind, it falls not a whit behind mathematical demonstration, as to its certainty.†

Although it is not true that Christianity rests mainly upon moral evidence, yet it is true, that it might rest on that ground with perfect security.

It is to this species of evidence that we have now appealed; not as establishing the heavenly origin of Christianity—which it *does* establish; but simply as it attests the historic reality of the person of Christ.

\* The “*Horæ Paulinæ*.”

† Some instances, intended to place this important point in a clear light, will be found in a note appended to the Lectures.



And here we must ask an ingenuous confession from whoever may be bound *in foro conscientiæ* to give it, that the notion of Christianity, and the habitual feelings toward it of many in this Christian country, are such as if, brought to the test of severe reasoning, could by no ingenuity be made to consist, either with the supposition that Christianity is historically false; or that it is historically true! This ambiguous faith of the cultured, less reasonable than the superstitions of the vulgar (for *they* are consistent, which this is not) could never hold a place in a disciplined mind but by an act, repeated from day to day, and similar to that of a man who should refuse to have the shutters removed from the windows on that side of his house whence he might descry the residence of his enemy.

If Christianity be historically true, it must be granted to demand more than a respectful acknowledgment that its system of ethics is pure; or, were it historically false, we ought to think ourselves to be outraging at once virtue and reason in allowing its name to pass our lips. While bowing to Christianity as good, and useful; and yet not invested with authority toward ourselves, we are entangled in a web of inconsistencies, of which we are not conscious, only because we choose to make no effort to break through it. If Christianity be true, then is it true that—“We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ;” and must, “every one of us, give an account of himself to God.” What meaning do such words convey to the minds of those who, with an equal alarm, would see Christianity overthrown as a con-

trolling power in the social system ; or find it brought home to themselves, as an authority they must personally bow to ? Christians ! how many amongst us are *Christians*, as men might be called philosophers, who, while naming Newton always with admiration, should yet reserve their interior assent for the very paganism of astronomy.

A religion of facts, we need hardly observe, is the only sort of religion adapted powerfully to affect the hearts of the mass of mankind ; for ordinary or uncultured minds can neither grasp, nor will care for, abstractions of any kind. But then that which makes Christianity proper for the many, and indeed proper for all, if motives are to be effectively swayed, renders it a rock of offence to the few who will admit nothing that may not be reduced within the circle of their favoured generalizations. Such minds, therefore, reject Christianity, or hold it in abeyance, not because they can disprove it, but because it will not be generalized, because it will not be sublimated, because it will not be touched by the tool of reason : because it must remain what it is—an insoluble mass of Facts. In attempting to urge consistency upon such persons, the advocate of Christianity makes no progress, and has to return, ever and again, to his document, and to ask—Is this true, or false ? if true, your metaphysics *may* be true also ; but yet must not give law to your opinions ; much less govern your conduct.

Resolute as may be the determination of some to yield to no such control, nevertheless, if the evangelic history be true, “ one is our Master, even Christ ;”—

He is our Master in abstract speculation—our Master in religious belief—our Master in morals, and in the ordering of every day's affairs.

It will readily be admitted that this our first position, if it be firm, sweeps away, at a stroke, a hundred systems of religion, ancient and modern, which either have not professed to rest upon historic truth, or which have notoriously failed in making good any such pretension. These various schemes need not be named;—they barely merit an enumeration:—they are susceptible of no distinct refutation; for they are baseless, powerless, obsolete.

Say you that Christianity is intolerant in thus excluding all other systems? But must it not be exclusive of every other, *if it be true*? Let us have a religion, willing to walk abreast with other religions—religions affirming what it denies, and denying what it affirms, when we admit mathematical or physical sciences, equally indulgent toward what must be purely absurd, if themselves are not so! Yet an exclusive religion is not therefore an intolerant one. An intolerant religion, is the religion of a sect—and of a sect in fear.

## II.

Our second proposition, claiming assent, if the first be admitted, is,

THAT CHRISTIANITY IS A RELIGION OF FACTS WITH WHICH ALL MEN, WITHOUT EXCEPTION AND WITHOUT DISTINCTION, AND IN AN EQUAL DEGREE, ARE PERSONALLY CONCERNED.



The very opposite characteristic has attached to every scheme of natural religion, as well as to every corruption of Christianity, from the first century onward; and it is to be especially noted that, just in proportion as such systems, whether pagan or nominally Christian, have worn an aspect of elevation, and have been fraught with moral energy, or a power to control the passions, they have, with so much the more arrogance, insisted upon, or tacitly assumed the rule of spiritual *caste*; and have laboured to effect a distribution of men into classes—patrician or plebeian;—spiritual, or natural, by the destination of nature.

But Christianity is therefore a *Spiritual religion*, and it moves the human heart from its depths, and confers a substantial dignity upon man, because it attaches a sovereign importance to those elements of our moral constitution in respect of which the natural or the artificial distinctions that subsist between man and man, be they what they may, must always seem trivial. Christianity addresses men, only or chiefly as they stand related to God; and in the presence of the Infinite, of what account are the differences of the finite?

This characteristic of Christianity—that it propounds truth to all, and demands to be considered, examined and accepted by men individually, is more peculiar than we, in modern times, can easily imagine; for this great principle, given to the world by the Gospel, has now so diffused itself through the atmosphere of the world of mind, that we breathe it unconsciously. But never, until it was proclaimed

by the Apostles, had it been surmised, either by Greek or Jew, that Truth, sacred Truth, the brightest daughter of the skies, might be vulgarized, and offered to the acceptance of the mass of mankind.

In the ancient world, Truth, whether theological or physical, was, like the costly perfumes of the East, an exquisite luxury, which should be found only within marble palaces. But in the modern world, and this vast change is attributable mainly to the spread of Christianity, truth has become, like the very breezes of heaven, common property, and is everywhere sweet, salutary, free; and enjoyed with equal zest in the cottage and the palace.

By no means so strange to the ear of the ancient world was the doctrine of the future life, and of the resurrection of the body, as was this doctrine, That Truth is every man's concernment, every man's right, and every man's most necessary possession. The apostolic voice, sounding throughout the ancient world, and calling upon "all men everywhere to repent, and to believe the Gospel," besides its direct religious import, carried an inevitable, though latent inference, which has effected the greatest of all the revolutions that have marked the intellectual condition of mankind. This challenge to repent and to *believe*, awakened in every bosom a sense of responsibility, altogether new;—putting as it did every human being in a position of direct relationship to God—the Judge of all; and fixing in the minds of all a deep conviction that the difference between truth and error, is of infinite consequence to men, individually.

The promulgation of this Christian principle gave a death-blow, on the one hand, to despotism, both spiritual and civil; and on the other to sophistry, whether philosophic or religious. For if every man be obliged, as he will answer it to God, to possess himself of truth, he must be free;—free—not only to think, but to speak;—free to move;—free to go in quest of truth;—free to bring it home;—free to confer with his fellows concerning it; and free to impart what he has acquired.

Again; if truth be for all, and if it be indispensable to each, it must break itself away from the erudite frivolities of schools; and will soon come to be discussed among those who neither could use, nor would endure, the astute methods of a factitious logic.

It is well known how early, and with what diligence, and with what variety of devices, those who had usurped the direction of the human mind, laboured to put out this candle, and to deny truth to all men. These endeavours actually triumphed. First, the pernicious “discipline of the secret,” then christianized Gnosticism, then Asceticism, then Hierarchical ambition, sealed the Gospel, in their turns; or, we might say, clothed the Sun in sack-cloth.\*

The Lutheran reformation broke in upon this mystery of pride, making a new proclamation of the apostolic doctrine, that the Gospel, as a system of

\* Some illustrations of these several affirmations will be found in a Supplemental Note.



momentous facts, is addressed to *man as man*, and that it concerns all men, without distinction. Whatever incidental disorders may have attended the new promulgation of this animating principle, itself is not chargeable with any such irregularities; for to affirm that every man should take heed that he knows what is essential to his salvation, surely implies no disparagement of the legitimate means of conveying truth from those who know more, to those who know less. On this ground, our choice is not between peace and ignorance, on the one side; and knowledge and license on the other; but between the disorders of ignorance—tending always toward anarchy; and the disorders of knowledge, tending always toward a more settled adjustment of elements.

It is evident that, if two religious systems be compared, of which the one addresses itself to a few, on the ground of certain natural advantages, or of some artificial prerogative; while the other addresses all, on ground common to all; the latter must bear, with the greater stress, upon the conscience, because it descends deeper into human nature, and has to do with motives of a wider grasp. Christianity is, for this very reason, a *spiritual* religion—that is to say, it is a power touching every principle of our nature, and working from the very depths of our hearts, because it heeds no distinctions among those who are heirs in common of immortality, are amenable in common to eternal justice, and are redeemed, one and all, by the precious blood of the same Saviour.

Within the Christian system, if a few do, in fact,



reach an eminence not attained by the many, it is only by allowing a fuller operation to motives which all might properly admit in the very same degree.

“Go ye into all the world,” said the Lord, to his ministers—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Now, the highest conception we can form of Spiritual Christianity, as embodied in the habits, motives, and conduct of men, embraces absolutely nothing beyond what must come to be the ordinary feeling of Christians, when this commission shall have been completed, and when, to “Christ, every knee shall have bowed, every tongue have made confession!” Nor indeed should it be thought possible, that a religion destined to be universal, can exhibit the harmony of its energies in any single instance, until it has become so:—it is abroad that the power of the summer sun is felt; not in the pencils of light that enter a darkened chamber.

We have professed that we shall ask nothing on behalf of spiritual religion which does not necessarily flow from the admission, that Christianity is historically true; but if true, then the commission which we have cited to preach the Gospel to every creature, is not merely a command to promulgate saving truth, but an implicit command also, addressed to every creature, to receive it. And let it be considered that the fact of coming within the range of this proclamation can be regarded as an indifferent circumstance, only on the supposition that the proclamation itself has not issued from a Sovereign Power. What may be the future destiny of the millions of the human

family upon whose ear this sound has never fallen, it were worse than idle to conjecture. Be it what it may, it must differ, in a forensic sense, from that of those who *have* heard it. An instantaneous change in a man's forensic position, or in his personal relationship to government, is a circumstance not unusual in civil affairs; and more than a few passages of the New Testament support the inference that it holds in the administration of heaven, and that *the mere fact* of having been formally challenged by heaven to repent, draws with it consequences as endless as immortality.

### III.

We thus reach our THIRD PROPOSITION, which is this, THAT CHRISTIANITY, AS A RELIGION OF FACTS, INDUCES A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND HIS MAKER.

A vindictive power, sure of its purpose, gives no notice of its approach. But if an absolute Sovereign encounters the guilty on his path, before the day of trial, and challenges his submission, a purpose of grace may fairly be inferred from such an act of condescension. This condescension however toward the guilty, does not leave him on the ground he previously occupied; for disobedience thenceforward takes the character of contumacy; and continued resistance may then be construed as treason. The Gospel, even rejected, has therefore induced a new and a permanent relationship between man and his Creator.

But how new and intimate is that relationship

which it induces when the offered reconciliation is accepted !

It may be well to measure the vastness of the interval which has been passed over, when such a relationship commences.

Among the many instances in which truth has been, as we might say, furtively obtained from Christianity, and made to grace systems not entitled to the credit they confer, is this of the paternal relationship assumed to exist between man and his Creator.

On the ground of natural, or as we should say, Abstract Theology, the bold assumption of this relationship can by no means be made good, in a satisfactory manner ; unless indeed we assign a very vague sense to the phrase, and intend nothing more by it than a wide benevolence, altogether regardless of individual welfare ; and which is to be traced no further than appears in the beneficent operation of general laws. But surely the paternal relationship involves much more than this !

And let it be considered how rapid and cold, at the very best, are any sentiments of devotion which rest strictly on the ground of abstract theology. Grant it, that the human mind, and especially as aided by the discoveries of modern science, does hold a sort of communion with the Infinite Mind. —Man, with the mechanical aids of modern science in his hand, stands on his turret of observation, midway in the field of the universe — an intelligent spectator of the movements of infinite wisdom and power ; for it is true that the procedures of the



infinite mind, are, to the finite mind, of an intelligible quality. Fitness, that is to say, the adaptation of means to an end, is the ground of this intellectual correspondence between man and the Creator of the world. Yet this correspondence does not merit to be designated as a communion ; for it has no return. We gaze with delight upon the wonders of the universe ; and once and again, perhaps, admiration bursts aloud from our lips.—We hail the Parent of all :—we invoke the ever-present Power, and we offer him our homage. But the feeble sounds of praise are lost in the vault of heaven ! there is none to answer us ; there is none to accept the language of our hearts ! MIND indeed is before us ; and an infinite energy of intelligence is in movement in our view ; but then this Energy works its work, heeding us not. It is seen upholding systems incalculably remote ; and again it takes its circuit near to the very ground on which we stand ; and we trace, with our microscope, the infinite Power, at work in the herbage beneath our feet. But toward *us* this Power—this Intelligence—this Goodness, is ever silent. Although, by abstract reasoning, we may have convinced ourselves that the creative power must be at every moment, and everywhere in operation, yet, so far as appears, or if we consult only our instinctive impressions, we might believe the vast frame-work of nature to be the forgotten product of a Power which long ago had taken its departure from its finished mechanism, and which will never return ; and is now occupied on some field of exercise immensely remote !



A mournful sense of the want of reciprocity belongs to those emotions with which, when untaught by revelation, Man contemplates the order and beauty of the universe. Nor is this the whole of our disadvantage, in a religious view ; for, eager and ratiocinative as is the human mind, it cannot but happen that, in our contemplations of nature, considered as the work of the Creator, the premises should engage more attention than the conclusion. And it is more and more so, in proportion as science becomes less theoretic and more exact ; less a matter of sentiment, and more of calculation ; less a delight of our leisure, and more the arduous occupation of our lives. What, in fact, is the theology of natural philosophy, but a formal inference, which courtesy demands to be noted on the closing page of a treatise, and which we have postponed to that page, lest it should interrupt, even for a moment, the eager course of our inquiries?

In the hope of getting near to the Deity, on some other path than that, either of philosophy, or of the Christian revelation, the Mystic, patiently enduring the hunger and thirst of the soul for divine refreshments, goes on a pilgrimage over a sandy desert in search of the temple of God, which he supposes somewhere to be discoverable on earth ; but which he never finds. Mysticism, without the animation of philosophy, and barren of its rational inferences, gathers no vital warmth in its endless circuits of meditation ; nor can it, any more than philosophy, pretend to enjoy an affectionate communion with the Infinite Mind. The mystic sits in silent expectation,

from day to day, from year to year, upon the steps of the royal palace ; but never yet has he exchanged a smile of recognition with the Sovereign.

How different is that communion of the heart with God which Christianity opens before us ! The Christian, looking on the right to philosophy, on the left to mysticism ;—looking on all sides in search of any who may compete with him, says, with a cordial animation, “ Truly our communion is with the Father.”

Either we ourselves must have very cold parental feelings, or we allow ourselves a very improper application of the word—Father, to the supreme benevolence, when what we actually intend by it is nothing more than that comprehensive goodness from which all creatures, in their several ranks, draw their supplies ; and which is equally rich in its bounty toward the conscious, and the unconscious, toward the grateful, and the ungrateful ; toward the pious, and toward the wicked.

What then is—paternal love ? It is not the simple benevolence of a superior toward the dependent beings who may sit at the same board. No, a Father’s love is a fondness for the *persons individually, and severally*, of his family : it is peculiar, it is indestructible, it is not diminished toward each, in being shared by many ; it is whole and entire for each. It is a concentrated desire for the well-being of each singly ;—a desire carried forward through all the details of family nurture and provision. A Father’s love grasps the object of its love, nor quits its hold ; nor consents

to substitute one object of fondness for another. Nor merely so; for not content in securing the good of its object, it looks for, nor can dispense with, a warm return of the same personal fondness. Is a Father satisfied in providing a fortune for his children, and in sending them well abroad, just as a legal guardian might do? A Father must have a reciprocity of love, or he is not happy. The heart of a Father yearns to receive, every day, the undoubted expressions of filial affection.

Is then God our Father? The Gospel declares it, as a fundamental truth; and in opening up, by instances, the import of this declaration, it shows that this language of sacred affection is to be understood, not in a sense lowered and vague, as compared with that which it bears in its ordinary acceptation; but in a sense of incalculably greater intensity and depth.

Genuine piety commences at the moment when the love of our heavenly Father towards ourselves individually, as his children, is distinctly recognised. The earliest movements of the new life of the soul take this very character. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," they are taught that they are "the sons of God," and find that they have not received "the spirit of bondage again, to fear;" but "the spirit of adoption," whereby they invoke God as their Father. "The Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God."

It is this filial sentiment—the peculiarity of Christian piety, which brightens the enjoyments of life, even



the most common of them, with a sense that, in our obscure homes, we are sitting, from day to day, at the board which our heavenly Father has spread. It is this feeling which mitigates and sanctifies affliction ; wherein, even when the sharpest, we discern a token of the truth that God is “ dealing with us as with sons,” and is in fact preparing us for our home. It is this same affection—the distinct filial sentiment, which dispels the terrors of death ; while the Christian believes that the Father of spirits is removing a member of his family from a less to a more desirable abode.

If Christian principles be thoroughly admitted, the Christian’s home, even under these inclement skies, differs but in circumstance from the mansion preparing for him above. “ If a man love me,” said Jesus to his disciples, “ he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and will make our abode with him.”

The intimate and affectionate relationship opened between the individual Christian and his heavenly Father finds its field of exercise in two principles very decisively pronounced in the inspired writings, as well of the Old as of the New Testament :—we mean the doctrine of a particular providence, and that of the proper efficacy of prayer, in relation to the ordinary events of life. It is easy to see in what manner a cordial belief of these principles tends to give vivacity and intensity to the religious affections ; for it is thus that the very same world of cares, fears, hopes, which tends to obliterate the moral sentiments



of other men, becomes, to the affectionate Christian, an efficacious discipline of faith and love.

We have named as *two*, the doctrines of a particular providence, and of the efficacy of prayer, though in fact they are only two expressions of one great truth. Both are so explicitly taught in the Old and New Testament, and both are so amply confirmed by precept and example, and so much of what is called Christian experience hinges upon both, that the truth of Christianity itself may seem to be staked upon the certainty of them; nor can it be doubted that, with many cultured minds, a factitious difficulty believed to be fatal to both, has had much influence in keeping alive a painful uncertainty, or a reserved scepticism, on the subject of religion. For if it be thought absolutely impossible to reconcile a belief in the efficacy of prayer, either with the operation of general laws, or with the dogma of necessity, or even with the Christian doctrine of the divine foreknowledge and predestination of events, how shall we believe Christianity itself to be true?

To hide from themselves the formidable front of this difficulty, some, with amazing inconsideration, and in violation of the clearest axioms of abstract science, have taken refuge in the supposition of a controlling providence in respect to great events, and none in respect of small; as if mountains might be subject to one law of gravitation, and mole-hills to another; or as if it were possible to make good any philosophical distinction between great events and small; or as if a great event were any thing else than

a congeries of small events, regarded *as one* only in relation to certain consequences thence resulting! Or some will persuade themselves—to such confusions of thought are we liable, that the divine providence comes in, at times, to avert the consequences which must result from its own general laws, were they left to take their customary course! What a conception is this of infinite wisdom as employed in the government of the world! Should we think well of a mechanist who, in any such manner, should have to put his hand to his work?

On the other hand there are those who, coolly regarding the notion of a particular providence, and of the efficacy of prayer, as illusions, or vulgar prejudices, and yet finding it impossible to rid themselves, as professed Christians, of the duty of prayer, resort to a supposition, equally vapid and preposterous, That the sole efficacy, or reason of prayer, turns upon its reflex, or secondary influence upon the mind of the worshipper, as an expression of the devout affections. As if reasonable men might be persuaded to continue, with sincere earnestness, any exercise whatever, which was well understood to be destitute of all direct utility! A notion such as this resembles the supposition that we might continue to enjoy the accommodation of moonlight, even if the sun were blotted from the planetary system! A reflective influence may indeed be of very high importance; but it must suppose always the reality of a direct influence.

In thus venturing to speak of the difficulties attaching

to these doctrines as factitious, we are not chargeable with the presumption of undertaking to make intelligible the intricate movements of the moral universe. It is not indeed given to man to penetrate these; yet it is always within his power, and therefore it is his duty, to dispel any confusion that may belong to his modes of thinking, by a stricter analysis of the notions over which he has a perfect command. We do not hesitate to affirm then, that, whatever seeming difficulty besets our Christian faith, on this ground, it is easily removable by the methods of analysis, as applied to abstract thought.

To enter upon any such analysis, on the present occasion, were out of place. Nevertheless, on the ground of a careful consideration of the subject, we must profess to believe the doctrine of a particular providence, and of the proper efficacy of prayer—inseparably connected as they are with the fervour of Christian piety, to be liable to no solid objection.

It is amid the vivid alternations of joy and sorrow, and under what may be called the homely discipline of the Christian's daily course, and as animated by the belief of the truths to which we have just alluded, that the devout affections are cherished, and are rendered at once keen and profound; while, by the very admixture of ingredients drawn from the passing interests of earth, extravagance is excluded, and a simple practical air is given to the religious life.

It will not be forgotten that the intimate filial



relationship which the Christian scheme establishes between man and his Maker, results from, and is inseparably connected with the mediation of Christ. Being “reconciled through him, we have access unto the Father;” and a fixed principle is it, rendered unalterable, at once by the Divine sanctity, and the polluted condition of man, that “no man cometh unto the Father”—none can claim the privileges of sonship, but “by the Son”—through his intercession, and as the consequence of his propitiatory death.

This great truth, adverted to in this place, lest we should seem forgetful of what is so peculiarly a Christian doctrine, will demand to be considered more distinctly hereafter. At present we have to do with the fact merely, and to which we direct especial attention, constituting as it does one of the most marked of the visible characteristics of Christianity—and one which removes to a wide distance every other system of religion, whether claiming to be Christian, or not.

It is remarkable that our Lord, while abstaining from a distinct enunciation of that scheme of redemption which, before his death and resurrection, remained incomplete; yet invariably, when addressing his sincere followers, encouraged them to look with affectionate confidence to “his Father, and their Father;” and when interpreting his own language, in this behalf, by apologues, he left them no room to doubt that they were to believe themselves *individually* the objects of the Divine care and love.



Previously therefore to any inquiry as to the Truths peculiar to Christianity, this intimate and affectionate relationship established between man and his Maker, as reconciled through Christ, presents itself to our notice, and should be regarded as a prominent feature of the Christian system.

Will it be said that our Lord, or his Apostles, give encouragement, in any way, to an unhallowed familiarity in our approaches to God; or that the reverence due to the Infinite Majesty is infringed by them? Certainly not. The contrary is most evident. We see then that, according to the IDEA of the Christian system, the deepest reverence is still compatible with an affectionate and filial confidence, involving the belief that the individual Christian is the object of a paternal regard.

On what scheme this adjustment of reverence and affection may be accomplished, is an after question. We now merely state the fact, and appeal to it as a most striking proof, at once of the spirituality, and of the benign tendency of the Gospel, and of its immeasurable superiority to every other religious system, whether contemplative or superstitious.

Within the entire range of antiquity we meet with absolutely nothing that approaches this characteristic Christian feeling;—except indeed what we find in the Old Testament, and especially the Psalms. And as to the several perversions of Christianity, from the first century to the present time, they stand condemned, one and all, by this very test; if by no other.

So far as such systems have leaned toward intel-

lectuality and abstraction, they have in the same degree excluded the warmth and simplicity of Christian piety. While such as have been marked by a tendency to superstition, have, as uniformly, and as completely, removed the worshipper to a distance, where dread and anxiety must prevail over every happier sentiment. Or if, under any such systems, the fanatic has broken through these restraints, he has drawn near to the throne not with calm filial affection, but with the effrontery of an evil spirit.

Let this one test be applied to that scheme of pietism which, in imitation of the style of antiquity, is at this moment, and with so much diligence and success, propagated around us. This restored superstition is in part poetic and imaginative ;—in part it is ritual and servile. That is to say—according to the constitution of minds, it is either a mild and picturesque enthusiasm, or a stern and severe fanaticism ;—both meeting within the same ritual forms, and worshipping beneath the same roof.

Now, as to the first of these species of pietism, it is a principle of human nature, well understood, that the genuine workings of the heart are in no manner more effectively repressed and excluded than when they become transmuted into the illusive form of a poetic enthusiasm. What is general benevolence—what is friendship—what is filial love, when they slide off into romantic sentiment?—nothing better are they than shining exhalations—false and cold ! Attractive as may be this imaginative guise of piety, it is not the piety—it is not the filial love of the

Christian system; and where the one is cherished the other disappears.

As to the stern, or fanatical species of superstitious piety—that of the emaciated devotee, we need hardly say that, as well the theological notions whence it takes its rise, as the temper it generates, are equally incompatible with the principles and with the spirit of that life-giving piety which our Lord's discourses tend to cherish.

#### IV.

We have said—That Christianity is a religion not of notions, but of Facts:—That in these facts all men have the same, and the deepest concernment, and That a cordial admission of them as true, induces a new and intimate relationship between man and his Maker. We have then to assume our ultimate position, in thus considering the exterior characteristics of the Christian scheme; and it is this—

THAT THE FACTS OF CHRISTIANITY, WHEN ADMITTED AS TRUE, ARE OF A KIND TO EXCITE, AND TO MAINTAIN IN ACTIVITY, THE WARMEST AND THE MOST PROFOUND EMOTIONS OF WHICH MEN ARE SUSCEPTIBLE, ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL CONSTITUTION OF THEIR MINDS.

A vastly higher amount of religious feeling than that which ordinarily entitles a man, by the world's courtesy, to the designation of an enthusiast, may yet be rigorously defended, as still falling short of what the nature of the case would justify. He is an



enthusiast, surely—not who feels strongly on an occasion which would justify feelings much more intense; but he whose emotions, whether more or less acute, are spurious; that is to say, are not of the quality which the occasion demands; and whose sentiments want heart, truth, proportion. A man is no enthusiast who, with an intensity of mingled love and fear, rushes forward to rescue a wife and children from imminent peril. But we hold in contempt one who, at such a moment, should think to act the hero, and save his family with *éclat*. We blame him, not for feeling too much; but for *feeling* too little; and this is indeed always the fault of the enthusiast, and of the fanatic too; and even when his spurious passions mount to the highest pitch.

The wild extravagance of the enthusiast, or of the fanatic, and the torpor of the formalist, although to the eye they may range as extremes, are, in truth, only varieties of the same lethargy of the moral faculties. Let the enthusiast and the formalist be both awakened to a cordial belief of the facts of Christianity, and the difference between the two will almost disappear.

But now, the objects of religious belief—the facts of Christianity, being in themselves of boundless range, and our personal concernment with them being of incalculable moment, whither, it may be asked, shall we be carried, if, with such impulses around us, we fully surrender ourselves to their influence? “After all,” says the objector, “is not Christianity a religion of sobriety and reason?” Assuredly it is so, and it is so because its seat is in the moral



faculties, which are never profoundly moved, but when they are moved tranquilly. The characteristic of the *affections* is depth, not visible agitation.

It is on this very ground that Christianity triumphs, as compared with every other religious system, ancient or modern, which has powerfully affected the human mind. These systems, so far as they have been powerful, at all, have been religions of agitation. Christianity, on the contrary, so far as it is effectual for its own purposes, is a religion of affection and habit, not of passionate commotion. Every powerful religion, Christianity excepted, has been either wild or sullen: and the same is true of every corruption of Christianity itself, in all the wide circuit of delusions, commencing with the ascetic frenzy, and ending in the base superstition of the middle ages. If asceticism be tranquil, it is tranquil by apathy: if superstition be tranquil, it is tranquil by the constraint of dread; but Christianity is at once tranquil and happy. If enthusiasm have its ecstasies, it is only joyous, so far as it is also unsound.

The very characteristic of a genuine warmth of affection, is, that it is so calm, as to be liable to the control of reason. Unreasonable affection, or a doating fondness, is just so much the less constant and profound, as it is less under command. To feel intensely—to feel keenly—to feel with so sovereign a force of emotion, as may carry a man through any labours or sacrifices, for the sake of one beloved, is only another description of moral serenity. This even balance of the mind, means nothing less than

a balance of great forces. We are not used to speak of the equilibrium of a straw; but we do speak of that of the engine-beam which vibrates silently, with a sort of omnipotence.

Single out an instance of a heart susceptible, more than others, of a tender and self-renouncing affection. Does not that chosen heart—one of a thousand, float in the midst of a tranquil temperament? Is not the beauty of an unruffled surface its characteristic grace, and its very symbol? What, in truth, is love, but the equipoise of the moral and intellectual faculties? and the emotions are then the most intense, when every faculty, moral and intellectual, has found its place of rest around that centre.

Christianity for this very reason, is a religion of sobriety, and a religion of self-control, because it is a religion of LOVE, intense, and deep.

“Why,” it is often petulantly asked—“Why, if the issues of the present life are of infinite extent, why are we so much restricted in our knowledge of the future world? Why is it only a vague report of the awful futurity that reaches the ear of man? Why is not the curtain of the invisible world sometimes lifted?” We do not undertake to furnish what might be the most direct reply to such a question; but we may, with confidence, give a reply, which we hold to be sufficient.

If the present life be indeed a season of moral discipline, and an exercise of those affections which are, in their nature, of a tranquil order, then undoubtedly

must the mind be screened, during the season of this exercise, from the impulse of impressions which would at once overwhelm them. You say, "Let me see the invisible; lift the curtain of the grave." But would you risk the consequences of such a discovery, even as it might affect the physical structure of the mind? Certainly the discipline of the heart, after such a revelation, would not be what now it is. By the mere guidance of our moral sentiments—our habitual emotions, we are to make our choice, on trying occasions, between virtue and vice; but this choice would obey another and a very different law, if we had actually seen the one in its native condition—eternally wedded to happiness; and the other in the grasp of misery.

If it be said, that the having heard a vague report of things future does not supply motives strong enough to fortify the frailty of human nature, exposed as it is to cruel temptations; we fully grant it: truly it is not a listless hearing of these things, or a vague belief of them, that will give effect to Christianity. What we have spoken of is a cordial belief of the Christian verities; and such a belief is not to be expected to come in upon the mind unsought for, and undesired.

Christianity professes to be a preparation for heaven. What then is heaven? or what must we suppose to be the conditions of a permanent and ultimate felicity intended for beings constituted like ourselves, and moreover, "far gone, as we are, from original righteousness?"



In offering a reply to this question, we shall not advance a step on the ground of mere conjecture; but shall confine ourselves to that which lies clearly within the range of reasonable, nay, of inevitable anticipations.

We ask then, first, are there to be sensitive pleasures, in a future state — secondary enjoyments, analogous to the pleasures of sense in the present state? Let it for a moment be granted that there may be such; yet it is certain that, if heaven be a world of progressive or upward-tending virtue, the bent of all minds must be toward enjoyments of a higher class than these: for a tendency downwards, or only an inert disposition to rest on the level of sensitive pleasure, can be nothing but sensuality, whether found on earth or in heaven.

In heaven, that is, in a world of permanent and progressive happiness, if there be at once higher and lower sources of enjoyment, the higher must always be held in chief esteem; and there must be a tendency toward them in all who themselves are to be permanently and progressively happy.

But now, shall we further imagine heaven to draw a portion of its delights from the purer sources of intellectual occupation—the pleasures of reason, in the acquisition, and communication of knowledge? If so, then sensitive pleasure must subside to a lower level; for if not, the inferior would be chosen in the presence of what is confessedly better; and such a choice is not merely unwise, but essentially vicious.

Man however is formed for action, still more than



either for passive enjoyment, or for mere contemplation. He is so constituted that the sense of enjoyment arising from the exercise of the active faculties is of a far more vivid and commanding sort than even the choicest pleasures of intellect. Let but a high field of action be opened before human minds, and towards it will rush the majority; if not all. Are great things doing? the frivolous leave their amusements—Elysian leisure is broken up; and even philosophers leave the stars to roll on while they come to take a part in, or to witness great actions. The supremacy of the active and moral faculties is attested by this tendency to forget and abandon every other kind of enjoyment, when great enterprises are in progress.

And yet it is not action, merely; but action, prompted by lofty motives, and tending toward vast results, affecting the well-being of multitudes, that sways the human mind, in a sovereign manner, and draws all toward one centre, as to a vortex.

But now what idea have we been used to entertain of a future state? If we exclude the terrific supposition of a world of anarchy—the chaos of discordant wills—if we think of heaven as a world of happiness, and therefore of absolute order, yet of high activity, it must be, not merely a sphere of vast movements, and of the development of motives deep and intense; but of actions and movements openly and constantly controlled by the Supreme Wisdom and Goodness. Heaven—a happy futurity, and as contrasted with earth, must be thought of as God's

visible kingdom, or his direct administration of the intelligent universe.

Heaven must be a sphere wherein whatever is good, and wise, and just is carried forward triumphantly, and amid the joyful acclamations of all. And yet it must be a world in which the series of events, as they are portions of a succession which is infinite, may often fail to be intelligible to finite minds. What then follows?—That a demand will as often be made upon the loyalty, and the devout submission of such minds. This is an inevitable supposition: the occupants of heaven, if they are to be constantly happy, must first have learned so to love God, under circumstances of perplexity and trial, as may fit them to pass forward on the high road of duty, with reverent affection, and with unshaken constancy, whether or not the actual aspect of affairs may consist with their notions of sovereign goodness, and wisdom. It does not appear how we can exclude suppositions such as these from our anticipations of a happy futurity.

Are we prepared to throw up the hope of immortality? If not, and if we allow ourselves distinctly to forecast what must be its conditions, under the sway of the attributes of an Infinite Being, we are compelled to grant that beings, such as ourselves, and if undisciplined by Christianity, must have many lessons yet to learn before it is possible that we should take part in the felicity of heaven. We have to learn to be happy in the only manner in which happiness can be rendered permanent and progressive to intelligent and moral agents. But what is Christianity? It is

the very schooling which we feel that we need in preparation for sharing in the only happiness possible to be enjoyed.

If we look around, Christianity stands forward, by the open or implicit confession of all, as a heavenward tendency:—it is indeed the only movement on earth, setting toward a world of peace, justice, purity, and love. Or if, looking upward, we compel ourselves to rest upon the conception of a state of permanent felicity—of holy energy, and affection, we must feel that we need that culture of the purest emotions which the Gospel, and it alone supplies.

The Spiritual Christianity then, concerning which, as to its elements, we are yet more particularly to inquire, is nothing but Heaven's training of fallen man, for its own happiness.

In concluding the present Lecture we invite a candid admission of the following affirmations—not one of which, singly, can, as we think, be denied, and which yet, in their connexion, embrace all that we mean to advance in behalf of Spiritual Christianity.

We assume as granted, the first principles of natural (or more properly) Abstract Theology, and the belief of a future life: we then say—That the happiness of a future life must consist in the activity of the benign emotions, as the impulses of a course of progressive virtue and beneficence.

That a true religion, considered as a preparation for future happiness, must possess this characteristic, that it is at once pure in its ethical principles,



and that it makes provision for the culture of the benign emotions, in a manner at once efficacious and happy.

We then affirm, what must surely be conceded, that no *positive* religious system, now extant (and not Christian) can pretend to make any such provision for a future state of purity and felicity ; and moreover, that—

No system of philosophical deism makes such a provision ; for even if its ethical principles were pure, yet, as it rests upon no ground of positive evidence, and can never be more than an opinion, it does but feebly affect even the few who are the most favourably disposed to yield to such an influence—and does not at all affect the mass of mankind. In fact, no scheme of philosophical deism has ever exerted a powerful and salutary influence over the conduct of men.

Christianity then has no rival, considered as a positive religion—claiming authority—pure in its ethical principles, and making a provision for the culture of the benign emotions as a preparation for the happiness of a future state.

But further.—In looking to Christianity under the aspect now mentioned, we must exclude first, those systems called Christian, the obvious intention of which is to reduce it to as near a resemblance as possible to philosophical deism, by rejecting whatever is most peculiar to it :—and we do so, because Christianity, when thus reduced, becomes as powerless and vapid as deism itself :—it ceases to be a positive or



authoritative system, and takes a place, quiescently, among mere schemes of opinion.

On the other hand, we must exclude as not Christian, although called so, those systems which, running in a direction opposite to the philosophic scheme, are of a servile character, and of abject tendency; and which, instead of giving an active and happy expansion to the affections, either benumb the moral faculties by dread and perplexity; or lull the conscience by formalities.

In a word, we reject as unchristian, on the one side, Rationalism; and on the other, Superstition.

We then stand clear to advance the unrivalled claims of the GOSPEL as being—

A positive and authoritative religion, resting upon Facts that are incontrovertible.

A religion pure in its ethical principles.

A religion which gives the fullest and happiest expansion to the benign emotions, by opening before us a ground of intimate, affectionate, and yet reverential communion with God.

What those great Truths are on which this communion must rest, it will be our part, in the next Lecture, to inquire.

THE  
SECOND LECTURE.

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ON THE TRUTHS PECULIAR TO SPIRITUAL  
CHRISTIANITY.



## THE SECOND LECTURE.

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STANDING clear as we do of party entanglements, and therefore free from the solitudes of controversy; we must not affect either to be ignorant of the now peculiar position of religious opinions, or indifferent as to the result of what may so well be called a crisis in the religious history of this country.

We think it neither desirable, nor indeed possible, to treat the momentous subjects now before us, irrespectively of the great controversy of the times. We must of necessity allude to this controversy, frequently; nor can we profess a philosophic neutrality in relation to questions on the determination of which, as we confidently believe, the religious, and, by consequence, the political and social well-being of this and other countries depends.

Disclaiming therefore indifference or neutrality, we yet hope, in this and the following Lectures, to give evidence of a conscientious impartiality; and so to speak as shall justify our profession of being the champions of no party.



We are then to speak of the Truths which are *peculiar* to Spiritual Christianity; and therefore in regard, as well to brevity, as to controversial justice, we must not include any truths, important as they may be in themselves, which it shares in common, either with natural theology, or with what we are compelled to regard as a mutilated Christianity.

Moreover, we must set off, from our enumeration, on this occasion, certain articles of belief, clearly attested indeed by Christ and his Apostles; but which are not properly elements of the Gospel. True indeed they may be, but they are more ancient than Christianity; they would have been true had it never appeared; and they must remain so, were it to be withdrawn.

A due regard to the unsullied brightness of the Christian system demands this distinction to be made, and to be much regarded, between certain articles which it assumes to be true, but which are not of its substance.

The advocates of Christianity, too often, as we think, have burthened themselves with the task of obviating difficulties connected with these extraneous articles of belief, which, so far as they may be substantial, press, not upon the religion of the Bible, but rather upon the first principles of natural theology. It is certain that Christianity neither aggravates any burthen that had previously rested upon the lot of man; nor imposes any new burthen. What the inspired writer says of the Divine Being himself, may be said of the word of his grace—"It is LIGHT,

and in it is no darkness at all." So far as any such burthens admit of being either alleviated, or removed, the whole tendency of Christianity is to lessen their weight, or to exempt us altogether from their pressure.

For example :—Our Lord and the Apostles appeal, with confidence, to those convictions of every human bosom which declare that man is liable to the Divine displeasure, and which give a foreboding of judgment to come. They reprove the sin and perversity of men with all boldness, on the ground of these admitted truths; and they draw the prompt and necessary conclusion from the fact of that sad degeneracy of human nature which is seen every where, is felt always, and is acknowledged, as often as pride is remanded, for a moment, by compunction or remorse.

That man is indeed "far gone from original righteousness," and that he neither loves God, nor desires the knowledge of him; and that, abandoned to his own principles and resources, he is destitute, helpless, and without hope; and that he is visibly tending toward an after state of still more open alienation from God—these melancholy truths, anterior to Christianity, are so assumed in the Christian system that there can be no liberty to call them in question by any who yield their faith to its authority.—They are, in fact, the very ground-work of that structure of mercy which is properly called—THE GOSPEL :—nevertheless they are not of its substance.

Our Lord affirms with distinctness that which, if

thoroughly believed, must alarm our fears to the utmost. This *affirmation is his; but not the fact.* The affirmation does but give an articulate form to that which may properly be called a universal foreboding of the human family. If it be said that such dark anticipations rest upon no positive evidence; yet, and prevalent as they are, they must be granted to possess a dim substantiality, upon which our Lord's assertions throw a steady light; and we feel them to be real.

Such is the belief, with all its appalling consequences, that the human race has fallen under the usurped sway of an invisible and malignant power—the ancient enemy of God—the outlaw of heaven, the author of error;—first the seducer, and then the tormentor of his victims.

A dark belief indeed is this! but we gain very little by rejecting it, so long as the human family remains as far from virtue as from happiness, nor indicating any tendency to a return. So long as superstitions the most frightful, with their unmitigated horrors, continue to press, age after age, upon the larger portion of mankind, we do but shift a difficulty, not remove it, by denying the agency of an invisible enemy.

This belief, whispered in all nations, is uttered aloud wherever superstition has long ruled without a check. In half civilized and savage countries, the infernal agency flares upon our sight; and, if we would be thoroughly equitable, ought we not to acknowledge, that, in civilized countries, indications



to the same effect are not ambiguous. May it not be more than surmised that the author of mischief who walks abroad with noisy pomp in pagan lands, keeps house among ourselves, and goes softly ?

Is it affirmed to be a blasphemy to suppose that there can be a Satan within the bounds of God's universe ? Alas ! how many Tamerlanes, in ancient and in modern times, have shown us that we are not at liberty to reason in this manner ! “ The beauty and beneficent intention of creation,” it is said, “ rebuke the dogma of a personal Evil principle.” But we ask, Why there may not be a Satan, if there be on earth tyrant tormenters, malignant calumniators, and avowed enemies of peace, order, and purity ? “ Beneath the fair vault of heaven,” you say, “ there *can* be no agent of misery ; or no sphere for his malice, if there were one.—Look between decks of a slave ship, and tell us why there may not be a Satan. Alas ! the darkest surmises of superstition have been only exaggerations of the things of earth ! And the horrid descriptions which deform the Koran are but wild dreams of things which have been actually transacted on earth ! When we go about ingeniously to trace the origin of the belief in an infernal world, to the horrors of eastern despotism, what do we but exhibit incontestable proofs that, notwithstanding the goodness of God, such a world may be ?

Under the very same conditions stands the doctrine of future punishment. The Saviour of the world vouches for the truth of this—the instinctive



belief of the human race. He speaks of the "wrath to come," and solemnly warns us to escape from it. But is he therefore our enemy? or is Christianity to be blamed on this account? First let us be sure that the alarm it gives is groundless; for if it be well founded, assuredly the Gospel is "good news." That sort of infatuation which impels us to vent upon an innocent messenger, our vexation on hearing ill tidings, attaches to us when we resent the Gospel, because it involves the belief of the terrible retributions of the future world.

In the present instance, after having fully admitted that the inspired writings allow us no liberty to call in question the articles we have mentioned, we protest against the common error of loading revelation with the weight of them. If they be denied, the Gospel itself has no reason; and wherever they have been denied, it has thrown off its characteristics of intensity and seriousness.

Moreover, certain of the most sacred truths of religion must not be claimed as peculiar to Spiritual Christianity, inasmuch as they have long consisted with the most serious corruptions of its purity. Thus must we say that orthodoxy, although essential to Christianity, is yet, of itself, not Christianity. A fact indeed it is that churches which have declined from orthodoxy, or that have only wavered concerning it, have, without an exception, lost the warmth of religious feeling, as well as the purity of religious practice; and after making a few descents, have

walked forth upon the broad level of deism, compromising almost the very name of Christian.

If therefore it were asked, "Is a trinitarian faith of much importance to practical piety?" we should be content to say—trace the history, either of individuals, or of churches, that have renounced it, and you will find an answer. A trinitarian faith, clear of every evasion, and excluding, even the disposition to look for evasions, we hold to be the basis of all Christian piety.

But now, with a due ingenuousness, let us look to the other side of this argument. Orthodoxy *alone*, is not, we say, Christianity, for it has consisted with the widest departures from its purport. More than a little constancy of faith and strength of mind are demanded in travelling over the road of the trinitarian controversy, from the early years of the third century, onward, toward modern times; and if our belief have not previously been firmly grounded upon the proper biblical evidence, it is probable that the perusal of this history will breed doubt, disgust, suspicion; and will end in a heterodox conclusion.

The Greek mind, which had relinquished none of the faults of a better age, and which retained few of its admirable qualities, and which had been schooled in nugatory disputation by a degenerate philosophy, a sophistical logic, and a spurious rhetoric, found its field in the trinitarian argument. Ponderous tomes have brought this argument down to our times; but how much of the warm apostolic feeling do these books present to our view? Something indeed; but

not more in proportion to the mass, than there are grains of the precious metal to be gathered from a mud bank, in the offing of a gold coast.

Orthodoxy, very early severed from evangelic truth, showed at once what was its quality, when so divorced. Some time before the breaking out of the trinitarian controversy, a discipline and course of life directly contravening the first principle of the Gospel had received the almost unanimous homage of the church, throughout the world, and was applauded, on all sides, as the highest style of Christian piety.

What moral influence was orthodoxy likely to exert, when it fell into the hands of those who had overlooked, or who virtually denied, the truths which alone can bring it home to the heart? The Saviour, forgotten as “the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth,” was soon forgotten also as the “one Mediator between God and man.” Most instructive is the fact, that, at the very moment when trinitarian doctrine was the most hotly contended for, and punctiliously professed, mediators many, and gods many, and goddesses many, were receiving, under the auspices, and by the encouragement of the great preachers, theologians, and bishops of the time, the fervent devotions of the multitude! It was to these potent intercessors that sincere petitions were addressed; while to the Trinity was offered—a doxology! Whenever men were in real trouble, and when they needed and heartily desired help from above, they sought it, where they believed they should the soonest find it—at the shrines of the



martyrs, or of the Virgin. No fact of church history carries a heavier lesson than that which we gather when, listening to the perorations of the great preachers of the age of orthodoxy, we hear them, first invoking, with animation, and high sounding phrases, a saint in the heavens, while the finger pointed to his glittering shrine: and then ascribing “honour and glory” to the Trinity!\*

Orthodoxy by itself, does not touch the conscience, does not quicken the affections; it does not connect itself, in any manner, with the moral faculties. It is not a religion, but a theory; and inasmuch as it awakens no spiritual feelings, it consists easily with either the grossest absurdities, or with the grossest corruptions.

Orthodoxy, powerless when alone, becomes even efficient for evil at the moment when it combines itself with asceticism, superstition, and hierarchical ambition. What is the religious history of Europe, through a long course of time, but a narrative of the horrors and the immoralities that have sprung from this very combination?

Heterodoxy, which has long been the temptation of the continental protestant churches, has at length wrought their ruin;—or, at the best, has left them in an expiring condition. But in perfect equity must

\* The facts here adverted to—important in themselves, are gathering importance daily, inasmuch as an avowal—at length unambiguous, has been made, of the long disguised intention to restore the very system of which these impieties were a principal element. Some few samples of the “catholic” piety of the fourth century will be furnished in a supplementary note.



it not be acknowledged that orthodoxy, severed from evangelic truth, has been the temptation of England; and that, at this moment, by reviving its ancient connexion with superstition, it gives just alarm to the true sons of the reformers? Those great men—the lights of the sixteenth century—whom we do not worship, but whose steps we would follow, were orthodox, and yet they were no monks: they were Trinitarians, but they were not idolaters: they had studied the Fathers; but they bowed to the Scriptures; and from the Scriptures they recovered evangelic truth—ineestimable treasure, which so many around us are now ready to exchange for the “vainly-invented” superstitions of antiquity!

Furthermore, in defining the principles assumed to be peculiar to Spiritual Christianity, we must not name some points of belief which have been differently understood, or might we say, differently *misunderstood*, among the cordial adherents of evangelic piety. There are articles which, though “full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons,” do not appear to all to be clear from extreme difficulties.

We name then, as *peculiar* to Spiritual Christianity, those truths which the human mind had never conceived of until the Gospel, and its precursive types, had appeared—those truths which, although they lie broadly on the surface of the apostolic writings, so many learned interpreters have endeavoured, by all means, and with indefatigable

industry, to dispel from the Christian system, those truths which the pride of the heart the most highly resents, but in which the contrite spirit finds its peace.

First in systematic order, as well as in magnitude, is the doctrine of the Propitiation, effected by the Son of God—so held clear of admixtures and evasions, as to sustain, in its bright integrity, the consequent doctrine of THE FULL AND ABSOLUTE RESTORATION OF GUILTY MAN TO THE FAVOUR OF GOD, on his acceptance of this method of mercy;—or, as it is technically phrased, “JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH.” A doctrine this, which, in a peculiar manner, refuses to be tampered with, or compromised; and which will hold its own place, or none. It challenges for itself, not only a broad basis, on which it may rest alone; but a broad border, upon which nothing that is human may trespass.

This doctrine when unadulterate, not only animates orthodoxy, but shows us why it was necessary to lay open the mystery of the Divine nature, so far as it is laid open in scriptural trinitarian doctrine; for we could not have learned the method of salvation, without first learning that, He who “bore our sins,” was indeed *able* to bear them, and was, in himself, “mighty to save.”

Whatever belongs to the Divine Nature must be incomprehensible by the human mind; and therefore—the incarnation is incomprehensible; and therefore—the atonement involves a mystery incomprehensible; but not so the consequent doctrine of

justification through faith. This doctrine turns upon the well understood relations of a forensic substitution ; and as to transactions of this order, they are among the clearest of any with which we have to do, as the subjects of law and government.

Yet simple as it is in itself, the doctrine of justification through the intervention of our legal sponsor, does, as we fully admit, rest upon a supposition so stupendous that we are fain to recoil, and to ask, “ can such things be true ? ”

— Is it true indeed, that the Eternal Word was “ made flesh ; ” and that, as man, he put himself in the place of the guilty ? Look abroad upon the wide field of nature, and then come home, and calmly consider what it is you imply when you speak of being “ justified through faith in Christ ; ” of whom you say, that he is equal with God, and that he “ upholdeth all things by the word of his power ! ”

It is, we grant it—a spectacle of wonders which the Scriptures open before us on this ground ; but are these wonders of such a kind that we may readily attribute them to the inventive faculty of minds like our own ? Let us however trace with care the steps by which we have come into the prospect of mysteries such as these :—just as a traveller looks anew to his footing when, having reached a mountain summit, through mists, which the morning breeze suddenly rolls away, he beholds with amazement kingdoms outstretched beneath his feet.

In bringing the mind distinctly to contemplate the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement effected by the



death of Christ, we feel ourselves to have reached an elevation higher than the highest of the speculations of man.—We are compelled to confess ourselves in the presence of things divine and eternal.

What then are the steps by which we reach this height?—Let us retrace them; and they are few.—The books of the New Testament are unimpeachable as to their genuineness and authenticity; and we are compelled to acknowledge the grace, majesty, and wisdom of the Saviour of whom they speak.—He claims the right to teach us sacred truth; and to teach it to mankind to the end of the world. The apostolic writings are warranted as the vehicles of the Saviour's instructions; and unless we can rely upon these, in their obvious meaning, and after we have used all diligence to ascertain it, this Teacher can be no teacher to us; nor this Saviour our Saviour. How should he be so, if we may not thus confide in the intelligible import of a known language; for on the contrary supposition, we have no means remaining within our reach, of knowing certainly the terms of the salvation herein offered to us. We do then rely with ingenuous confidence upon the grammatical sense of the apostolic writings. We follow whithersoever these messengers of Heaven may lead us. Whatever they plainly affirm, we must either accept as true, or must disclaim their authority.

But Christ's ministers teach us, if language can convey such a meaning, that he was indeed "God manifest in the flesh"—"God over all, blessed for ever."



If we draw back from such a doctrine, as in dismay, let us look to the alternative.—The book which compels us to believe that it is from God, and the only book in the world that embodies a perfect morality, and the only book that contains an authentic hope of immortality for man, is then, if we cannot admit this doctrine, so ambiguous, nay, so delusive in its language, that it can warrant no certain conclusions on any subject. Granted, that the incarnation and the atonement are stupendous mysteries, which surpass our reason, and try our faith: but the alternative supposition—that the book of God may not be trusted, poisons faith, and breaks reason on the wheel.

Jesus then is divine in the highest sense; but why divine? Wherefore has the “Son left the bosom of the Father?” The means are infinite, is the end such? For what specific purpose was it that he who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory,” “abhorred not the virgin’s womb,” and walked the earth, and conversed as man, with man? Was it only to teach us virtue? or was it only to embody it? But then where is the proportion of the means to the end?

But we say, it was to suffer, “the just for the unjust;” and those who hold Christian truth thus far, undoubtedly hold that which is of saving efficacy: but we must advance yet further, if we would exclude the most serious errors. The doctrine of the atonement, dimly perceived, or at least not held in connexion with its forensic consequence, became little more, to the ancient church, than a spectacle of

wonder and pathos, to be exhibited at certain seasons of the year ; and in its turn with the commemoration of other martyrdoms !

The Church history of fourteen centuries affords convincing proof that something more than the doctrine of the propitiatory work of Christ, retained in a creed, is necessary to give vitality to the Christian system. Very early the wonders of Calvary, in turn with the eulogies of the saints, were the themes of the cold, turgid rhapsodies of a false oratory.

Almost every practice, rite, and principle of the ancient church had the same tendency to remove, further and further from its place, although it was never denied, the scriptural doctrine of the atonement. The Apostle had said, "there is now no condemnation to them that believe ;" and that the sacrifice for sins, "once offered," effected an absolute expiation. But it was not so in the sense of antiquity.—The expiation did not expiate ; for the ascetics discovered that they had still the whole work of satisfaction to do for themselves. The expiation did not expiate ; for the church was constantly occupied in praying for the repose of souls, affirmed by itself to have received the utmost benefit which could be received from a sincere faith in Christ. The sacrifice once offered for the sins of the world did not, any more than those offered under the Mosaic dispensation, "make the comers thereunto perfect ;" for it needed to be reiterated in the sacrifice of the mass. It was not true, in the opinion of the church, that we are "saved from wrath" through Christ, for

it taught even the faithful to look forward to a terrible futurity of purgatorial anguish.

No fact, connected with the history of opinions, is we think more conspicuously certain than this, that the ancient church, while holding trinitarian doctrine, and while professing to believe in the atonement, had, in some inexplicable manner, compromised, or lost sight of, the principal element of Apostolic Christianity.

Compare, for a moment, the broad aspect of the Mosaic dispensation, and that of the ancient church system. The Psalms, and the other devotional portions of the Old Testament, make it evident that, although the ritual economy did not fully open the scheme of divine mercy toward man, it did yet avail to convey a calm and affectionate comfort to the heart of the contrite worshipper. As a proof that it did so, we may appeal, not merely to the pure spirituality which breathes through the Psalms, and the prophetic writings; but also to the significant fact that it was not until sometime after the close of the prophetic dispensation, that the Jewish people went off into that fanaticism which exhibits the uneasiness of a guilty conscience, wholly ignorant of the Divine mercy.

Most remarkable is the contrast which presents itself in comparing, on this ground, the ancient Jewish, and the ancient Christian church. The pious members of the former did enjoy the stillness and the illumination of an early morning time; and they looked with the comfort of hope toward



the spreading brightness of the sunward sky. But *after* that the one sacrifice had superseded its types, infatuated men, with the Gospel open in their hands, and although they had eyes to see, saw not its glory; but deprived themselves of all its blessings. The Jewish church had lived upon hope; the Christian church seemed to have inherited despair. The most ferocious, as well as absurd methods of placating the wrath of Heaven, joined with the doctrine that sin after Baptism, that is to say, the vast majority of all sins, could be entitled only to an ambiguous forgiveness, denied peace to the consciences, as well of the few, as of the many.

A forensic act, authoritatively announced, and in consequence of which the condemned stands exempt from the demands of Law, whether it rest on the ground of his afterwards established innocence, or of any satisfaction he may have been able to propound, must be, in its nature absolute. It is not an undefined indulgence; it is not a weak connivance; it is not a timid compromise; it is not an evasion which must be held to condemn, if not the Law, its administrators. After such a transaction has been recorded in court, and proclaimed aloud, no conduct, on the part of him who has been so discharged, could be more offensive than that of an endeavour to go over the ground again; as if to effect the same result, on conditions less humiliating to himself.

In the justification of man through the mediation of Christ, man individually, as guilty, and his Divine



Sponsor, *personally competent to take upon himself such a part*, stand forward in the Court of Heaven ; there to be severally dealt with as the honour of Law shall demand ; and if the representative of the guilty be indeed thus qualified, in the eye of the law, and if the guilty, on his part, freely accept this mode of satisfaction, then, when the one recedes from the position of danger, and the other steps into it, Justice, having already admitted both the competency of the substitute, and the sufficiency of the substitution, is itself silent.

Such a transaction does indeed originate in grace or favour ; but yet if it satisfy law, it can be open to no species of after interference. Now in the method of justification through faith, God himself solemnly proclaims that the rectitude of his government is not violated ; nor the sanctity of his law compromised. It is He who declares that, in this method, he “ may be just, while justifying the ungodly.” After such a proclamation from Heaven has been made, “ who is he that condemneth ? It is God that justifieth !”

A sacred doctrine this !—not to be tampered with ; and most honoured, assuredly, when admitted with a simple-hearted and joyful gratitude ! If it be asked, “ Is it a truth ?” in reply, besides citing the apostolic authorities, which are most explicit, we might well ask—Whence such a doctrine might proceed, if not from God ? Which of the creations of the human mind does it resemble ? Whether we regard that aspect of it in which it is thoroughly intelligible ; or that in which it presents

an inscrutable mystery, it stands equally remote from the customary style of human speculations; beside that it contravenes the pride and prejudices of the heart. Clear and bright as noon is this Truth: vast and deep as infinity.

Nevertheless, we suppose an objector to declare that he can by no means bring himself to embrace a doctrine involving what this involves. Let him however well consider on what part of the great scheme of man's salvation, as taught in the Scriptures, the real difficulty presses.—We believe that, with most objectors, it is placed too far forward. Fully do we grant it to be indeed a mystery that guilty man should be delivered from the hands of justice by the personal intervention of his Sovereign; and yet, is there not a *previous* ground of amazement in the mere fact, admitted as it is by all who do not deny man's individual responsibility, that he—feeble as he is, and frail, should, by the Creator and Sovereign of the universe, be held personally answerable for the acts of so brief a course? Is not *this* the mystery? and after we have mastered this, or at least have found that, amazing as it is, we can by no means evade it; there will remain no sufficient pretext for rejecting, as incredible, the wonders which attach to the mode of his deliverance. Is it true that the children of earth are severally the subjects of a universal government, and that they shall *singly* be called to account at that tribunal? If we find that this must be granted, the way is open also for the mystery of mercy.

On the other hand, when once we have deliberately rejected the scheme of salvation, as if it were incredible, we shall find it only so much the more difficult to retain our hold of those notions of virtue apart from which man can neither respect himself, nor his fellows, and which are found to be the necessary means of social order, and of personal control.

If these notions of a moral system (in the religious sense of the terms) be once abandoned, then there is no home for man—for his towering conceptions of happiness—for his boundless hopes—for his pure affections—for his domestic felicity—for his sentiments of virtue and honour; there is no resting-place short of that sensual swamp, whereon, although he may take his level with the brute orders, he becomes the infamy of the creation—the enigma of the universe; while they remain as they were, the instances of the wisdom and benevolence of its Author.

But it is not possible to abandon the religious notion of a moral system; and the more intimately we follow this notion out, in its consequences, the more deeply shall we feel that the mystery of redemption is anticipated by the equal wonders of that relationship between the finite and the Infinite which is involved when the Supreme Being condescends to challenge men, singly, as offenders, and as answerable, individually, to Himself.

By this very challenge man—not as a *race*, but as an *individual*, is assumed to be a morally independent and free agent, in a sense which lifts him from the dust to a level of reciprocity with God. The Eternal Ruler



of the Universe declares himself a party in a controversy in which each individual of the human race separately sustains the opposite position. No liberty is granted to us to recede from the high, but ominous dignity of thus waging battle with the Almighty: this is a nobility we are born to; and if in no other manner, yet by acts of wilful rebellion, have we singly accepted the distinction, and stand pledged to the consequences.†

At *this* point then is the true knot of the difficulty which is supposed to attach to the scheme of man's salvation; and those who are staggered by its vastness, would do well to consider how far they will have to step back, toward the ground of the most abject animal philosophy, before they can reach a level where indeed there is no mystery to be encountered, because there is no Truth to be grasped. And yet, even if that level *were* reached—what perplexities still surround us! On this level—the level of atheistic sensualism, we meet a being, endowed (with cursed) intellectual faculties, which enable him to bring under review, and to measure, and weigh, a moral system, and to calculate the consequences of allowing himself to be reckoned a member of such a system; and then, finding these consequences undesirable—to cut himself off from it (in will at least) and by a deliberate suicidal act, to die—to the extent of half his nature! Are we in search of doctrines which may be scouted as incredible, and which reason must indignantly resent? Here then is such a doctrine—incredible, not because mysterious, but because monstrous. But



how do we seem to breathe anew when, after rejecting enormities such as these, we accept that which—mystery as it is, we yet assent to, as the true harmony of our moral faculties!

Is redemption a mystery? but let us well consider the invisible wonders that are more than dimly indicated—by the vast range—the depth, intensity, and force of the feelings proper to an unschooled conscience. If opinions, or if “creeds,” may be factitious, affections are not so. How absurd the supposition that they can be! Take then a sensible and unsophisticated mind; and, only adapting your style to its style—to its acquired medium of thought, may you not at once, and with ease, confer with it on the entire range of ethical questions? will it not respond and consent, while you reason concerning “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”—while you speak of duty to man, and of duty to God, and while you bring the moral sense into contact with eternal truth and virtue?

The moral system then, and the religious position of man as related to God is a *fact*, not a *theory*. How should you be able to awaken, in a sensitive unsophisticated bosom, and by the magic of a single word, the pungent sense of shame and demerit; or the glow of virtuous sympathy, if the Creator had not, by his own endowments, made man, so far, a partaker of his own nature? How could you excite, within a guileless, and yet not guiltless bosom, the anguish of compunction; how heave it with the swellings of repentance, if the waters there were not deep? They

are deep ; and the agitations of that bosom—its ebbings and flowings of love, fear, resentment, gratitude, are but waves breaking upon the shore of an ocean ; and the sounds they bring to an attentive ear, are the murmurs of the deep—even the vast profound of the moral universe !

We boldly say then, that the incontestable facts of the relationship between man, individually, and the Eternal God—a relationship at once of community of moral nature, and of forensic dependence, if duly considered, preclude every objection to which the scheme of redemption might seem liable, as if it involved more than can be granted to be possible. Such objections are, we say, precluded, inasmuch as they are *anticipated* by a mystery as vast ; and yet not to be denied.

But we suppose the scriptural doctrine of human salvation effected by the propitiatory sufferings of the Son of God to be assented to. By what rule then do we discriminate between a cold orthodoxy in respect to it, and an evangelic faith ? Our rule must in this instance be an experimental, rather than an abstract one :—a rule not so much polemical as practical.

It seems reasonable to affirm, that, if the apostolic doctrine of justification through faith be clearly held and cordially admitted, it will occupy the foremost place in our regards ; for it is the ground of all our hopes, and the relief of every fear : it is the luminous centre of all religious truth. It is the sun in our heavens : it is the source of light, and the source of

vital warmth. We do not therefore hesitate to affirm that it is scripturally held only by those who do assign to it this prominent position ; who recur to it ever and again with delight, who never feel it to be an exhausted theme ; who build their own hopes upon it firmly ; who invite others to do the same with confidence ; who neither distrust it in theory, nor dishonour it in practice ; who enounce it freely, and boldly ; and of whose piety it is the spring and reason.

On the contrary, we cannot but impute a want of apostolic feeling, as well as a dimness of religious perception, to those, whatever articles may be expressed in their creed, who speak reluctantly on this great theme, or ambiguously, or in a tone of evasion ; who now confess it, now deny it ; and whose writings or discourses on the subject, baffle the endeavours of the most candid to ascertain what it is they really believe.

And without a doubt, or a moment's hesitation, we charge those with disaffection towards this first principle of Apostolic Christianity, who would fain " reserve " it for the hearing of a few, and would put it, and keep it, under their bushel. We utterly disallow, as spurious, the delicacy of those who profess that they cannot desecrate so sacred a truth as that of the Atonement, by proclaiming it in the hearing of the thoughtless multitude !

The great question now at issue in the protestant church is not whether we shall restore or reject certain ancient superstitions ; but whether we are to retain

that GOSPEL—that bright apostolic truth, which those superstitions so early supplanted, and with which it never has for a moment consisted, and never will consist. The question on which, at this hour, the religious destinies of England turn, is not whether we shall re-establish, or shall repudiate, the “ROMISH,” or any other doctrine, “concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping and adoration, as well of Images, as of relics, and also invocation of saints;—those fond things, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of scripture; but rather repugnant to the word of God.”—THIS IS NOT THE QUESTION; but whether “the righteousness of God through faith,” shall stand or fall among us; and whether the Protestant Church itself, shall continue to be a witness for God, or shall be rejected as apostate. If the distinctly pronounced doctrine of justification through faith be indeed apostolic, can the bold restorers of the base superstitions of the fourth century make out their title to the honours of Apostolicity? How can we grant it them; or how refuse to assign it to those who having clearly read this apostolic truth in the apostolic writings, cordially entertain it, and convincingly teach it; and who honour it in their lives, and whose orders are authenticated by the Holy Spirit, in “giving efficacy to the word of his grace?”



## II.

The Second great truth, peculiar, as we believe, to Spiritual Christianity, is that of THE SOVEREIGN AND ABIDING INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RENOVATING THE SOUL, IN EACH INSTANCE IN WHICH IT IS RENOVATED.

This doctrine also, like the preceding, while in one view it is an inscrutable mystery, is in another an intelligible truth, which accords at once with our consciousness, and with the principles of sound philosophy. The contact of the Infinite Mind with the finite, is indeed a depth; but not so the restoration of the moral faculties, as a matter of consciousness. The gradual predominance of better impulses, where the worse have had sway, is no abyss wherein faith is staggered; nor is even the fact, when it occurs, difficult to be admitted, of a *sudden* breaking down of the obduracy of the will, and the yielding of pride, and the subsiding of the tempest of passion, and the dying away of earthly desires. Whether the commencement of such a change be conspicuously marked, or not, is a point not important. What is there, we ask, either in the fact of such a change, or in its being attributed to the divine agency, which reason ought to resent? It may be offensive to pride; but we boldly say it is not so to reason; and it can become so only in consequence of mystifications which may have been thereto attached.

It may be well here to state the distinction between mystery, and mystification; or between the *inscrutable*

and the *perplexed*. Those things may properly be called mysterious which, either in their own nature, or from the peculiarity of their position toward us, transcend the powers of the human mind to grasp them: they are things which may be known of, although not known. The divine omnipotence is a mystery, and the omnipresence; and so is the indisputable truth, that the Eternal Being is related to the successive points of duration—the past, the present, and the future, in one and the same manner, whatever that may be; or, to use a mathematical analogy, that His relation to time is measurable, at all points, by the same radius.

But *mystification* is factitious mystery; or, it is the heaping of obscurity upon things which, in their nature, come within the range of the senses, or of the consciousness, or of the reasoning faculty. To affirm that a substance familiar to four of the senses has suddenly ceased to be what our perceptions declare it yet to remain, is mystification, not mystery; nor is such a dogma to be admitted without inflicting an injury upon the intellectual and moral faculties, fatal, in an equal degree, to the vitality of faith, and to the integrity of reason.

Those early, and alas! not extinct superstitions which stood connected with the doctrine of the operations of the Holy Spirit were all of this class. How was a most sacred truth transmuted into a frivolous mystification, when men were taught to look for the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit—not into their own bosoms, but to the fingers of the priest!

But a true philosophy will not, we think, condemn as irrational the following affirmations—That a great—an *entire* change in the condition and habits of the moral faculties — or what may well be called a *renovation* of them, is indispensable to our recovery of true virtue and felicity.

—That men, unassisted from above, do not—and we may add, cannot, effect any such renovation of their moral nature.

—That this happy change, wherever it takes place, must therefore be regarded as the immediate effect of a divine influence upon the mind.

—That this change coincides with, and is undistinguishable from, the natural and ordinary operations of the mind:—that is to say, it is a *moral* restoration; neither preternatural in the sense of the enthusiast; nor semi-miraculous in the sense of those who uphold sacramental and ritual mystifications.

Let it only be granted that true felicity must consist in the predominance of holy affections, or of emotions habitually tending toward God; and let it also be granted that no such affections ordinarily belong to us, nor spontaneously spring up or grow with our growth; then must we not acknowledge that the doctrine so clearly affirmed in Scripture of the sovereign renovating influences of the Holy Spirit is full of consolation to ourselves, as well as strictly accordant with the best conceptions we can form of the goodness of God?

What then is conversion, but an act of sovereign benevolence, the highest in its intention, and the most



to be desired ; and which, if we deal faithfully with ourselves, we must confess to be needed not less absolutely (if we are to be happy) than is that creative power to which we owe, every moment, existence itself?

Now we are fairly entitled to claim this sacred truth—the doctrine of the sovereign, renovating influence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and the direct source and cause of whatever is holy, *as peculiar to Spiritual Christianity*, inasmuch as, like the doctrine of justification through faith, it has (even when admitted in words) been constantly evaded, or supplanted, on the one side by rationalists, and on the other by the promoters of superstition, ancient and modern.

Great truths are always lost or retained together ; and the two we have named have both been removed from the view of the mass of professed Christians, through a long course of time, by the substitution of symbols, for the things signified ; and by the practice of so magnifying the rites which typify spiritual realities, as to throw these into the shade.

It was vain to suppose that the mass of men would continue to think of justification, and sanctification, and of fitness for Heaven, as *moral and spiritual realities*, when they were assured, in the most solemn manner, that justification, sanctification, and preparation for heaven, all passed upon them, unconsciously, at the moment when they emerged from the baptismal pool !

But at this point we are warned “ not to trifle with things sacred.” God forbid that we should



do so, while intending to plead for the most serious truths! But in this instance we repel the imputation with confidence, and affirm that it is not we who trifle with things sacred.—What things then are sacred? The rites of religion are so, when they hold their place; but they become mischievous impieties, when thrust from it. To rites we assign the utmost measure of importance which, so far as we can gather, the Apostles teach us to assign to them; and we dare attach no more; and especially because all religious history exhibits the infatuated determination of the human mind to evade realities, if it be possible, by the aid of ceremonies.

But we say it is not the adherents of evangelic doctrine who trifle with things sacred. Surely the immortal welfare of man is sacred; and yet how is this sported with by those who lull the conscience with a promise of salvation that may be managed by proxy! Must not one tremble to witness the temerity of those who, with little or no inquiry into the condition of the soul, yet venture to grant passports into eternity?

But it is not we who trifle with things sacred, or even with the symbols of such things; and we appeal to the fact that, wherever Spiritual Christianity most flourishes, there the genuine ordinances of Christ are the most reverently and affectionately regarded.

Yet again—we hold nothing on earth to be more sacred, than is the work of the Holy Spirit, when clearly manifested in the temper and unblamable conduct of Christian men. If there be any instances in which the reality of religion comes home to our

convictions with irresistible force, it is when we converse with those who themselves hold much communion with God. As the Agent is most sacred, so is his work; nor can there be, as we think, an impiety more bold than that of those who, after distinctly contemplating the work of the Spirit of God, indubitably displayed in the walk and heavenly dispositions of Christian men, dare to scout it as altogether factitious, because, forsooth, the Christianity of these seeming Christians is open to the suspicion of having reached them through some indirect channel! Thus to walk forth amid the most precious of the works of God, trampling without remorse upon whatever does not happen to lie within a certain ecclesiastical border, must be held to indicate—is it the highest moral courage—or not rather, a temper most irreligious, as well as arrogant.

This is indeed to trifle with things sacred; and the more so when it is remembered that the prevalence of so intolerant a theory, and the bold avowal of it by those who are regarded as the best informed expounders of Christianity, silently but extensively operates to drive cultured and ingenuous minds into deism or atheism. What is this Christianity, say such, which, while professing to be a religion, not of bondage and forms, but of truth and love, nevertheless impels its adherents to violate all charity on the precarious ground of an elaborate hypothesis!

It is unavoidable thus pointedly to advert to these now prevalent errors, because, in the practical interpretation given them, they are absolutely incompatible

with an adherence to Spiritual Christianity. Those who are sternly enjoined, on peril of their own salvation, not to recognise as Christian brethren any whose ecclesiastical legitimacy may be ambiguous, are, of necessity, driven to adopt such a notion of Christian piety as may consist with the application of this ecclesiastical rule. In plain words, they must learn to scout as futile or illusory, whatever is *moral* and *spiritual* in religion; while they fix their attention exclusively upon that which is formal and adjunctive. Nor will those who are taught to judge of others in this manner, be slow to judge of themselves, on the same principle. "If we be Christians *ecclesiastically*, it is enough: all besides is illusion."

And such in fact are every day seen to be the products of the ecclesiastical theory which we denounce as, at this time, the antagonist of Spiritual Christianity. In its recent revival it has shed a cold arrogance into many bosoms that once glowed with Christian affection; and, at the same time, it has drawn such aside (in how many sad instances!) from an enlightened regard to the substantial truths of the Gospel; while they give all their cares to frivolous and servile observances.

But we turn to a happier theme. Happy indeed, and ennobling, as well as efficacious, is the belief, that He "from whom all holy desires, good counsels, and just works do proceed," dwelleth in us, as the Author of spiritual life! In a word, that the body of the Christian is "the temple of the Holy Ghost."



A doctrine this, which, if scripturally held, precludes at once despondency and presumption. For how should we despond, if He who “creates us anew in Christ Jesus,” is almighty? or how presume, if we be convinced that, were the sacred energy withdrawn, there “would remain in us no good thing?”

### III.

We reach then our ultimate position, and THE THIRD TRUTH, peculiar, as we assume, to Spiritual Christianity, which is this—THAT A CORDIAL RECEPTION OF THE TWO ALREADY NAMED, JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH, AND THE SOVEREIGN INDWELLING INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BRINGS WITH IT A SETTLED AND AFFECTIONATE SENSE OF SECURITY, OR PEACE AND JOY IN BELIEVING, WHICH BECOMES THE SPRING OF HOLY TEMPER, AND VIRTUOUS CONDUCT.

Man, created for happiness, is truly virtuous only so far as he is happy. Virtue may indeed be in a suffering condition; but never is it actually severed from happiness; for it is never cut off from communion with Him who is the fountain of joy.

The Apostle, not speaking as in the person of one who had been admitted into the third heavens, and had witnessed the delights of paradise; but when addressing Christians, *as such*, appeals to their consciousness, and affirms it as a common truth, that, “being justified by faith, they have peace with God,



through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." " The love of God," he says, " is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." He enjoins Christians, as their characteristic duty, to " rejoice always ;" and he repeats the injunction, as if to remind them that he had not forgotten the many sources of uneasiness which might disturb their happiness, and which yet, in his view, should not destroy it.

If the Gospel be " glad tidings," can it be strange that it should make those glad who heartily receive it? or would it not be strange if it did not? Are we anxious that our Christianity should be apostolic? let us then hear " the chief of the Apostles," who affirms that although the object of faith be unseen, yet the Christian, loving his Saviour, and believing in him, " rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." If to ourselves any such state of mind, or such affections, or any such happiness, be not known, or easily conceived of, our faith itself should be examined anew.

" Perfect love," says " the beloved disciple;" that is to say, *genuine love*, " casteth out fear;" and with it " torment."

Through the knowledge of the Gospel, and the hearty reception of its promises, we are " made partakers of the Divine nature." But God is " blessed for evermore." Shall we then be drawing near to this nature continually, without a happy consciousness of the felicity we are approaching? Shall we come up to the fountain of light, and receive thence no illumi-

nation? Those do not appear to know much of human nature who are jealous of happiness, as an energy of virtue ; or who suppose that virtue on earth will not show whence she has descended, and whither she is going.

Bring this principle to a familiar test. The kingdom of heaven, we are expressly told, is a paternal system of love and duty : it is not a despotism. Now, if we be personally familiar with the materials whence our illustration may draw its analogy, let us look within the circle of a family, and there make trial of the opposite methods of eliciting *the greatest amount of effective service, and of dutiful performances* ; that is to say, of filial virtue. First, let us work the principle of bondage and fear. Let dread be the prime impulse of every domestic movement, and love a rare and-precarious blessing. Let the paternal tenderness, if felt at all, yet be disguised by frowns, and let it express itself, in all instances, so ambiguously that the child may reasonably question its very existence ; and let each son and daughter, from the youngest to the eldest, constantly have in view, as a chilling caution, the possible, and not very improbable event, of a final expulsion from the paternal home, and a cutting off from all share in the inheritance. Make trial of this method, until you have converted a home into a prison, and children into abject and resentful slaves !

But assume the opposite principle. Do not exclude fear ; yet govern by love. Do not exclude suffering ; but never, so far as your power may avail,

never let suffering exclude happiness. Let all be as happy at home as the conditions of the present state may admit; and especially let all feel that happiness is secured to the utmost extent to which parental vigilance may reach. Whatever variety of disposition a family so treated may exhibit, can there be a doubt that it will immeasurably surpass the wretched family, in filial obedience, as well as in attachment?

— If we then, being evil, yet know how to rule our households by the means of love and joy, how shall not our heavenly Father much rather know how to do the same?

But where then, it may be asked, is our security against presumption, or a licentious abuse of Christian privileges? The same apostolic word that enjoins us to rejoice, conveys the necessary precaution; and to take up the precaution, forgetting the privilege which it balances, is surely as great an error as to use the privilege, and to forget the precaution. A true belief of the Gospel brings with it a belief also of the fact which the Gospel attests. The Christian who indeed believes himself to be saved will recollect from what, and at what cost, and to what end.

In all cases in which the human mind comes habitually under the control of a single motive, or of motives of one cast and tendency, the consequence is some species of extravagance, bordering often upon insanity. If we are to be powerfully, and at the same time healthfully affected, it must be by motives which act upon us in the way of counterpoise, or of



mutual correction; and the product of which is a *joint* product of forces moving in different, if not opposite directions.

The motives of spiritual—evangelic Christianity are of this composite kind. They are deep contraries, thoroughly harmonized. The motives and reasons of an assured peace and joy, spring directly from considerations the most profoundly afflictive, or humiliating. It is in this manner that moral force is generated; and yet a force which is of healthful and happy tendency.

Is it true that the Eternal Word—was “made flesh, and dwelt among us,” and “died for our sins,” having been constituted “a curse for us?” Sin then is ruin—immortal ruin; and our condition, if not benefited by that sacrifice, is desperate. But the Saviour, as we learn from his own lips, although given by the Father, to suffer for the sins of the “whole world,” yet *gave himself* for his people, individually. The propitiation, which was sufficient for “taking away the sin of the world,” has no excess of sufficiency in relation to the sin of each believer. On this ground the apostle speaks of his Lord as having “loved *him*, and given himself for *him*.”

A distinct apprehension, therefore, of truths such as these, brings home to the heart every kind of powerful influence—every imaginable element of awe, compunction, dread, gratitude, and tender affection, to which the human mind may be open. And just in proportion as sentiments of the one kind become intense, those of the opposite quality are enhanced.



Why then may not the Christian who has learned to renounce all confidence in himself, as well as in beings like himself, and to trust alone in Him who is "mighty to save"—why may he not freely rejoice, may exult with joy unutterable, in the prospect of a blissful immortality near at hand;—seeing that the very condition of this joy is an always proportionate depth of those convictions which render him serious in temper, sedulous in duty, and keenly apprehensive of the divine displeasure?

It is on this very ground that we reject, as equally unchristian and unphilosophical, those sombre interpretations of Christianity which aim to secure seriousness of temper, assiduity in good works, and a necessary dread of the Divine Majesty, not by a balance of counteractive motives; but by giving an almost unlimited operation to motives of one order, and these of the kind which, when uncorrected, crush and vilify the moral sentiments.

But do facts bear us out in advancing these broad affirmations? Let us select our genuine instances, and we say they do. Wherever evangelic doctrines are indeed entertained with an unfeigned belief of their reality, there the product is not a lax, presumptuous religionism; but a humble, and yet happy piety, and a consistent virtue.

But need we say that a loose and heartless evangelic faith may, in a moral point of view, be of far less value than is a cordially professed superstition? The vast intrinsic difference between genuine Christianity, and the austere illusions which are now

supplanting it, is much obscured by this circumstance. The grave puritanism (may we so apply the term ?) which fascinates so many ardent minds, is, although it dates itself from a remote age, in *this* age quite new, and it possesses all that freshness and animation which is characteristic of a recent religious impulse ; or, as we might take the liberty to call it, of a “ revival.”

Meantime the evangelic principle had, at the moment of the birth of its antagonist, spent itself ; or had become in a degree languid. Its interior force had been dissipated by many and distracting occupations — commendable in themselves, but not easily made to consist with profound sentiments, of any kind. At the same time an almost unprecedented outburst of political and ecclesiastical strife (must we not say of hatred ?) had produced its inevitable — its *own* effects, in vitiating the religious sentiments of thousands, in all communions.

At such a moment, an austere pietism, exempted from every admixture of vulgarity by issuing from halls of learning, and graced with the undefined (and alas ! unexamined) recommendations of antiquity, and offering to young and ambitious spirits a course of glory — if not heavenly, yet not earthly in the ordinary sense — such a system, thus graced, comes into comparison with what was already exhausted — divided — distracted — with what had ceased, for some long time, to be under the guidance of powerful and deeply moved minds.

The consequence was such as might have been supposed, and such as has invariably resulted from similar oppositions of a spent energy, with an energy renovated. If at this moment there be reason to anticipate a better issue of this collision than the usual course of human affairs would warrant us in expecting, such a hope must be drawn, chiefly, from the now obvious fact, that the restorers of "Catholic" superstitions are, like many other leaders of sects, gifted with more zeal than discretion.

But it will be demanded—what we mean by speaking of the evangelic principle as having been lately, or as still being, in a state of some exhaustion or collapse.

Certainly not, that evangelical doctrine has ceased to be professed with explicitness, or taught scripturally. Certainly not, that it has so fallen into decay as to fail of producing its proper and happy effects in very many instances, and on all sides. Certainly not, that any dogmatic apostasy from the faith has taken place among us.

On the contrary, it should be acknowledged with gratitude, that those frightful delusions which were the fruit of an absurd system of metaphysics, more absurdly applied to the simplicity of scripture, and which at one time extensively disgraced evangelic communions, have nearly disappeared; and that, partly as scattered by argument, partly as extinguished by their own fumes, these false fires are almost gone out.

What then do we complain of? not of False Doctrine;—but rather of faintness at the heart; as a

man may be labouring under no assignable malady, whose pulse yet is feeble, whose appetite is wayward, whose waking hours are listless, and whose repose is unquiet.

If it be our part to speak of Spiritual Christianity, we are bound to take its characteristics as we find them in the apostolic writings;—not as they may happen to be presented to the eye in the momentary aspects of this or that favoured religious body. What does impartiality mean, if, while loudly denouncing superstition, or any other antichristian error; we allow it, by our discreet silence and delicate reserve, to be gathered, that the body from the bosom of which we are supposed to come is, in our esteem, no sharer in those ever changing alternations of health and sickness which attach to whatever is human!

Good reason is there to hope that, after the now spreading “Catholic” puritanism shall have freely exhibited its inner qualities, and shall have honestly avowed its ulterior purposes, the deep movement of which it has been the immediate cause, may, through the divine goodness, take a happier course, and extensively promote genuine piety.

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;”—and certainly there does not belong to the religious commonwealth any such individual directive wisdom as might avail for the conduct of the whole, in its dubious progress toward truth and virtue. This overruling power it is not in man to exercise. Our part is, while humbly we implore



this divine governance of the church, meekly to yield ourselves to it, when personally challenged to surrender our prejudices or to forego our preferences, or to make any other sacrifice, which may give evidence of our "love of the Truth."

THE  
THIRD LECTURE.

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ON THE ETHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL  
CHRISTIANITY.



### THE THIRD LECTURE.

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WE are now to speak of the ethical characteristics of Spiritual Christianity; or of the influence which the great truths affirmed to constitute evangelic doctrine should, and do exert over the dispositions and conduct of those who cordially embrace them.

But whence are we to derive our knowledge of what this influence actually is? Is it to be drawn inductively, from observation of facts around us; or hypothetically, from a consideration of what ought to be the moral efficiency of such truths?

We reply that we should adopt either method without fear as to the result. Nevertheless the first, namely, that of an appeal to the actual and visible influence of the great principles of the Gospel, wherever they have been allowed fully to take effect, could not be rendered satisfactory, or be exempted from plausible objections, within any such limits as are prescribed to us in the present instance.

Scarcely any subject, connected with religion, can be named, of wider compass than would be a thoroughly impartial and comprehensive inquiry as



to the actual efficiency of evangelic principles, as they have been maintained in this, and other countries. If we do not go into such an inquiry, it is not from hesitation as to the issue; nor merely from a regard to our limits; but still more from a decisive unwillingness to affirm, without the adduction of ample proof, even those things of which we have the most entire persuasion, and the truth of which long observation has confirmed.

In taking however the other method—namely, that of inferring the proper moral operation of certain religious truths from their manifest tendency, we do not intend in any instance, to draw inferences not sustained, as we fully believe, by sufficient evidence; much less to assume in theory what is contradicted in fact.

This method moreover, is warranted by the belief which, as we think, the entire course of human affairs, within the circle of church history, suggests, or which it impels us to adopt, that the religion of Christ, destined as it is to bless the human family through a far extended period, ought to be considered as now, in our times, preparing itself for a development of its powers, proportioned, at once, to the wide extent, and to the long continuance of its ultimate triumph. The cycles of the Gospel have been slow in their revolutions, because the entire period of its history on earth is of incalculable extent.

How then do such views bear upon our present subject?—Just as the breaking of the morning affects

the movements of those who, in painful anxiety, have watched through the night. While thus therefore considering what is, and should be, the moral influence of the Gospel, we are, in this sense, "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward to those that are before." We are not thinking of the struggles of that which is expiring; but of that which is even now coming to the birth.

We are then to confine our view of Christianity to that aspect of it in which it presents itself as a power, adapted to the reformation of the human family; or its restoration, universally, to a condition of purity, brotherly affection, and rectitude; and to so much happiness as the prevalence of truth and love must ensure.

That the religion of Christ was framed with the intention of bringing about such a restitution of the social system, and that it is actually advancing toward the accomplishment of that end, will, as we think, convincingly appear if we look to two or three special instances, in which what it has actually effected affords ground of hope for its further triumphs.

It is certain that while the New Testament contains, scattered over its surface, the definite articles of a perfect system of ethics, delivered in the form of precise precepts and prohibitions; it contains moreover, and which are the secret of its power, vital principles, not always defined; but which, as they are evolved, one after another, and are successively brought to bear upon the opinions and manners of

christianized nations, do actually remove from them those flagrant evils which had accumulated in the course of time, and which, so long as they are prevalent, abate very much the religious sensibilities even of those who are the most conscientious.

Let it then be well observed that, while the conscience of the individual Christian—studious of his Bible, is informed and directed, and his conduct is bound by explicit precepts, touching at all points the entire surface of his moral existence; these precepts are propounded always as exemplifications of principles, supposed to reside in his bosom, *as a Christian*, and apart from which the mere precept, even if rigorously respected, would leave him liable to the imputation of not fulfilling “the law of Christ.” It must be so; because Christianity is a spiritual religion;—a new life of the soul, manifesting itself, as occasion arises, in the outward behaviour.

But this is not all; and it is at the present moment especially important to keep the further truth in mind, that the New Testament, considered as embodying a system of morals for the world—a system which is slowly to develop itself, until the human family has been led by it into the path of peace and purity, effects this great purpose, not by prohibiting, in so many words, the evils it is at length to abolish; but by putting in movement unobtrusive impulses, which nothing, in the end, shall be able to withstand.

It is in this manner that the gospel has already conquered for itself an ample territory of just and

humane sentiments, on the field of the social system; and it is thus that it is now, with an observable acceleration, going forth—conquering, and to conquer. These conquests proceed even at times when Christian piety may not be in the most healthy state. We take an instance or two; and those which we shall name will show that no hopes of reformation for the world, if clearly founded upon what we may be sure is *the ultimate moral intention* of the Scriptures, ought to be regarded as chimerical; and that, with a steady faith, we may look forward to what would deserve to be called a golden age, so far as the universal prevalence of Christian principles must bring about so happy a condition of the human family.

To the Gospel, thus working reformation by the noiseless operation of its ethical principles, blessing us often unawares, and even against the bent of our perverse wills—to the gospel, Woman owes every thing good; for she derives from it her power to bless indeed those whom she loves; and thus to become herself happy. 'Acknowledged as "one in Christ," with man, and a sharer in the perils and dignities of personal responsibility to God, and a partner, without a shade of difference, in the hope of immortality, she takes a place never before granted to her. This religious equality is enough to ensure her welfare in every other sense; and the formal precepts which guard the sanctities of domestic life stand forth indeed as law; but are, in a manner, superseded by deeper forces, which work from within. The precept is the verbal expression of something more efficient, and of



wider application than itself. Polygamy—the curse of man, not only disappears, (and whether it be distinctly prohibited or not) but a broad foundation is laid for the choicest happiness which earth admits, that of the untainted domestic affections. If then a question could be seriously agitated as to the lawfulness of polygamy, under the Christian system, it would properly be determined, not by searching for enactments, or statutes; but by considering whether the hopes and dignities of Christian piety be woman's right; for if they be, then is she no longer man's slave; but his friend and companion on the road to heaven; and as such, her pure affections are not to be outraged, or herself degraded. This instance exemplifies that occult, but efficacious process by which the religion of Christ brings about the reform of manners, more certainly than could be done by prohibitions.

It was as opposed to the first principles of the Gospel—the gospel of mercy, that the sanguinary passion for the shameless murders of the public games gave way. The Apostles, in their circuits through the Roman world, had everywhere witnessed these horrors; and yet they did not, as angry reformers would undoubtedly have done, openly inveigh against them; nor did they *explicitly* forbid Christians to take part in them. But they taught humanity on principles so deep and wide, as to ensure, at length, the removal of these atrocities, wherever the Gospel should come to be respected by the government of any country.

Or we may take the very significant instance of

slavery—that horrid usage—backed by a worse doctrine—slavery, which at this moment is cursing the world, less even by the miseries it immediately entails, than by causing, as it does, a blockage on that high road whereon mercy and truth for all nations are ready to make their triumphant progress.

The present patrons of this enormity please themselves in affirming, what is indeed true, that neither Christ nor his Apostles explicitly forbid it. They do not;—but they have done more than forbid it; for they have challenged the slave as *man*, and have taught him that his soul can neither be bought nor sold. Only leave this doctrine to take its effect, and it will, in its season, emancipate his body. Christ, moreover, has taught men to cherish and to respect each other as brethren. But will slavery consist with the universal acceptance of any such royal law of love? It will not. Christianity and slavery, when the former comes to rule the world, will not endure each other: the one must expel and destroy the other; for they work, not merely from different, but from antagonist principles:—the one is fatal to the other; and that one which cannot die, must ere long slay its rival.

This signal instance is the more pertinent to our immediate argument, inasmuch as it is now, on a large scale, and under circumstances of unusual excitement, displaying this very characteristic of Christian ethics, to effect an ulterior beneficent intention by the efficacy of its principles, more than by the force of its precepts. Moreover it is to be observed,

that while the evil against which the Gospel is thus directing its silent irresistible energy, is of the highest enormity, the absence of express prohibitions on the subject, and the apparent sanction of an implicit approval, give the bolder relief to the doctrine we are illustrating. For in this instance it is seen, that, notwithstanding the ambiguity or silence of the Christian code, touching slavery, and notwithstanding the fact of its having given its influence more explicitly to strengthen the principle of patient endurance in the slave, than to inculcate upon the master the duty of releasing his bondman;—that yet the deep-working principle of Christianity—its force of love, as it slowly develops itself, and becomes better understood, and takes a firmer hold of all minds, and raises the standard of humane feeling, must render slavery every year less and less tolerable, within christianized communities—must at length expel it from the bosom of civilization—must drive it further and further outward into the wilds of society, and leave it, seen and confessed as such, a sheer curse, resting upon the heads and homes of its infatuated supporters; and at length bring it to be denounced, by all but savages, as a nuisance in the world—a nuisance insufferable, to be swept away at whatever risk.

A parallel instance of the gradual efficacy of the Christian ethics in removing inveterate evils by the slow expansion of principles, rather than by express prohibitions, is that of War. The amiable friends of universal peace seem, although diametrically opposed in every thing to the upholders of slavery, yet to



have fallen into a similar misapprehension of the spirit of the Christian code. For while the apologists of slavery are looking into the New Testament for what may serve to palliate their horrid doctrine, in the way of apparent connivance, the friends of Peace are searching for that which, we presume, they will not find—direct prohibitions of war; although they may easily find that which must, in its season, and perhaps at no very remote period, relieve the world of this scourge, and for ever. Let but a Christian feeling pervade, even if it were only three powerful communities of the civilized world—and there would be no more war, in any corner of it.

Now in any instance in which the patrons of prescriptive evils run to the Scriptures to find either precedent for them, or the absence of formal prohibitions, they might be told, not merely that, in taking such a part, they show themselves to be destitute of “the mind that was in Christ;” but that they totally misunderstand the very structure of the Christian system, as an ethical code, and which we are bound to regard always in its power and purport, rather than in its prohibitions; and especially when we have to do with immoral usages peculiar to countries, or to times. The reprovers of such usages should therefore be peculiarly careful not to stake a good cause upon the interpretation of single texts; but should rather bend their utmost endeavours to the work of promulgating, in the purest form, those first truths before which nothing that is malign, unjust, or impure, will be able to stand. It is a circumstance deserving to be



noticed, that those who have the most signalized their zeal in opposition to *special evils*, have not often been remarkable for their cordial regard to the great truths of the Gospel.

This practical error, so often fallen into by Christian philanthropists, unfortunately gives countenance, indirectly, to the course pursued by men of an opposite temper, who, in quoting Scripture (as Satan quotes it) in defence of impiety and wrong, plant the Gospel, in the Gospel's own path; and doubly obstruct its triumphant progress, first, by upholding what is wicked; and then by loading Christianity with the disgrace of seeming to support it.

Let the Gospel, in its genuine energy, pervade a community, and each ancient abuse that attaches to it, will come, in its turn, to be questioned and rebuked, and will at length yield to this sovereign influence. We confide too little in the heavenly efficacy of Christian principles, when we labour to effect reformatations on the lower ground of utility, or of a temporizing expediency.

And yet even when argued on these lower grounds, the purity of the Christian ethics seldom fails to win a triumph. Some old injustice—some immemorial wrong, which has worked as a canker within the social system, is at length brought under notice. This interference of “busy zeal” is at first hotly resented. The originators of the protest look again to the grounds of their objection, and strengthen their argument. The reasons they advance compel attention, and are examined, and then the entire code of

Christian ethics, as applicable to the evil in question, is brought to bear upon it. The result, whether it be more or less definite, and even if the first protest be overruled, is to raise the tone of moral feeling, throughout the community, and to bring the rule of morals into closer contact with the consciences of all who are sincere in their Christian profession. The Gospel of Christ has thus won another triumph, in preparation for that which shall be universal; and to the eye of an intelligent observer these successive evolutions of Christian morality, are clearly predictive of such a triumph.

If Christianity be yet upheld in its purity; and if it be permitted to work its way forward, a time must come, when the acceleration of its progress shall attract all eyes, and shall begin to date its periodic advances, not by centuries, but by years; or even by months and days. The world is governed, less by the direct influence of known and fixed truths, than by variable feeling, reverberated from all sides; just as the temperature of the atmosphere is maintained, not by the full sunshine, but by the radiation of heat from all surfaces on earth. Men individually—or at least those who are open to moral influence at all, act in a manner which represents, not their individual acquaintance with what is right, but that diffused sense of right which a few, who intensely feel it, have shed around them.

Thus it is that every powerful impulse communicated to the social mass by energetic minds reproduces itself, until even the few almost lose their distinction

of feeling more than others, and of thinking more justly; because they have brought the many to think and feel with them. This has happened several times within the last fifty years.

How much soever there may be still to lament in the moral condition of this country; yet those who are able to recall, with distinctness, the state of opinion, of feeling, and of manners, in particular respects, about the close of the last century, must acknowledge that great progress has been made, if not in reforming the mass of the people, yet in bringing better modes of thinking, and purer and more humane sentiments into credit, and in securing for them an undisputed influence. Much has been done within the compass of forty years, having the aspect of a preparatory work, and the full effect of which may be expected to appear, like the sudden verdure and fertility of a northern summer, at the moment when a new promulgation of great truths—an uncontradicted expansion of evangelic doctrine, shall throw fresh life into the Christian body.

The grievous evils which affect the mass of the people—their ignorance, recklessness, and misery, have so been made the subjects of anxious consideration of late, and have so, in their frightful details been explored, and attested, and so measured in their vast extent, and so spread to view in their particulars, that, without an hour's delay, the remedy would be applied, and the true means of renovation zealously employed, were but the middle and upper classes—through the Divine mercy—to

awake to a Christian feeling in this behalf. May we assume that the preparation foreshows such an awakening to be at hand?

The contributions, labours, sacrifices, demanded by a Christian care of the mass of the people, and which it must seem extravagant to expect, while whatever is needed for such purposes is to be wrung, by the importunities of a few, from the indifference or reluctance of the many—such aids would flow in as a mighty river, if an *accordant* evangelic feeling were to spread itself among those who already come within the influence of Christian instruction. Great truths once recognised cordially by a christianized community, and then, the ardent benevolence which lately was the distinction of those who are benevolent by constitution, becomes the common sentiment of many; and a generous glow of charity, which had appeared like a hectic spot, now gives the colour of florid health to the social body. Sentiments of justice and kindness (hardly to be distinguished when both are vivid) kindling from heart to heart, and lit up by interchanged sympathies, whatever is well proved to be just, kind, and reasonable is borne forward, as by a tide; whereas, while the mass of society is stagnant, things good and just, if carried at all, are carried as by the force of a hurricane; and in such instances, although the triumph of humanity is joyfully hailed, the result disappoints the hopes it had excited.

When not springing from great truths—and therefore not truly Christian in principle, the best-



intended reforms of morals have not merely failed of effecting their object ; but have brought upon society the most terrible reactions ; as if to compensate the Patron of evil for some temporary restraints, by a wild outbreak of licentiousness, not to be repressed in a century !

This, in fact, has been the melancholy story, again and again, of attempted reformations in morals, through the successive periods of Christian history ; and surely this mass of experiments, prompted often by benevolence, but unwisely contrived, and unhappily concluded, should avail to teach some caution to those who are zealously labouring to effect the suppression of flagrant evils by *factitious means* ; or if by means lawful, yet not in accordance with the first principle of Christianity, considered as a scheme of ethics. Christian morality knows nothing of reforms that do not spring from an inner impulse—even the impulse of a Christian faith ; nor admits such as are imposed by a power acting upon the surface of human nature, and working on toward the centre.

There is too much reason to fear that, when Christian energies are set to work in this introverted direction, which is not proper to them, the mischief intended to be removed, is pent up only, and gathers both heat and expansive force during its short season of compression, which shall teach us our error by the tremendous impetuosity of its explosion.

As on the present occasion we at once challenge entire independence, and disdain every ambiguity, we cannot do less than plainly express the opinion that

the benevolent, and no doubt greatly successful endeavours now making to repress the use of intoxicating liquors—we must not say to promote *temperance*; for temperance is altogether another matter—these endeavours, involving pleas and pretexts which common sense resents, might well bear to be seriously reconsidered; and placed on a basis of principles truly and distinctively Christian.

Two courses are highly dangerous in morals; nay, we must say, are of fatal tendency, and are sure to turn virtue back upon itself, with loss and discredit. The first is to teach men, either directly, or by a clear implication, that it is vain for *them*, such as they are, to hope to become virtuous, or to control their passions, with a uniform and religious governance of the lower nature by the higher. The second error is to suggest to them the belief, or to teach it, that they *may* become virtuous on some other than the highest principles.

The first error promotes the sordid ethics of interest or expediency; the real meaning of which is, that, if a man can but by any dexterity evade ill consequences to himself, it matters nothing whether his bosom be the residence of an angel, or the cage of seven demons.

The second of these errors, should it pervade a community, would have the effect, if we might use the figure, of bleeding Truth to death; for it would bring about such a contempt of *principle*, as must end in leaving society to be governed by the most frivolous of all motives—those of conventional

decency—courtesy, heartless honour, and a varnished selfishness.

But Christianity, as a system of morals, while it rejects any partial and interested concession to virtue, implying disaffection to virtue's self, and commands every man to be religiously *virtuous*, not factitiously *abstinent*; opens to all the means of becoming so, by surrendering themselves to its own efficacious truths. Not only is a conventional or arbitrary morality *incomplete*, as compared with Christian morality; for it is unlawful—it is prohibited—it is condemned, as an insult, at once to the Law, and to the Mercy of Heaven.

Here then we make our stand in behalf of Spiritual Christianity, considered as a means of producing genuine virtue; and we affirm this to be its first characteristic — THAT IT ATTACHES A SOVEREIGN IMPORTANCE TO TRUTH, AS FURNISHING THE ONLY SOLID SUPPORT FOR THE MOTIVES OF SELF-GOVERNMENT, PURITY, AND CHARITY.

Every other notion of Christianity—every scheme of piety and virtue which we must think ourselves bound to except against as unchristian, or as Christian only in a mutilated sense, has either presented a lifeless body of precepts and prohibitions; or, if it has rested upon motives and principles, these have not been those of the Gospel, which are at once deep, serious, and happy. There have been systems of morality, called Christian, some of them indulgent, and gay in their aspect; and others austere; but Christian morality, springing as it does from its

own truths, is at once far more profound than the severe scheme, and far more happy than the lax and frivolous scheme.

But at this point an acknowledgment must be made which is due to the thorough impartiality we profess. When we speak, as we are compelled to do, of two parties, now ostensibly opposed, one to the other;—the one promoting what we cannot but condemn as superstitious, and deficient in evangelic feeling; and the other party, as maintaining evangelic principles of the highest importance; it must by no means be thence inferred that we mean to represent the one party as altogether to be reprobated, and the other party, as altogether to be approved, in matters of Christian practice. Truth and virtue, we do not hold to be chartered to companies: they are possessed only *in part* by those who possess the most of them; and they are possessed in some good measure, even by many who must yet stand condemned as capitally wrong in theology.

Men, serious and upright, cannot easily be thought altogether to have failed while labouring to give prominence to some one element of Christian virtue, which their opponents may have too little regarded; and concerning which these, their opponents, might do well to take lessons at their lips.

It is so, as we presume, in the great controversy which now agitates the Church. Assuredly we believe the revivers of the mongrel divinity, and dangerous practices of the ancient church, to be



pursuing a course in the last degree pernicious; and so far, those who oppose them in this endeavour are performing an urgent and important duty, and in the discharge of which we could only wish them success. Yet should it be regarded as an ominous triumph, even of evangelic principles, if they were so to prevail as to drive the chariot of controversial war over the field, at once crushing their antagonists, and demolishing what these may have done in refreshing particular branches of Christian morality. Rather let us put on a Christian humility, and be sincerely willing to learn, even from those whom we strenuously oppose, to think anew of whatsoever things are pure, grave, seemly, just, and of good report:—whatsoever things give evidence of self-command, self-renunciation, stern assiduity, and patient endurance of evil.

While devoutly desiring to see the corruptions of the ancient church warded off from the protestant pale, far should we be from desiring to witness, either the personal discomfiture, or disparagement of the restorers of these errors; or such a reckless extinction of their endeavours as should leave room for no salutary reaction to take effect upon evangelic bodies. Such a corrective influence, it ought to be acknowledged, has long been greatly needed; and should be welcomed as seasonable.

A willingness to receive correction in matters of Christian morality from our theological opponents, may well be founded upon a consideration of the fact, that, while the unhappy divisions which

distract the Christian commonwealth are in part redeemed by their tendency to preserve, and to give the greater accuracy to dogmatic principles, they have a most unhappy influence, as well in diverting the minds of Christian men from the simple and well understood elements of morality, as in lowering, on all sides, the due impression of the sacred importance of these simple elements. Not only are our thoughts so much distracted by controversy that we become far too little mindful of the tempers and virtues which should recommend a Christian profession; but the solemn sanctions of morality lose their influence over our minds. We become more eager than conscientious—more acute than sincere, and more zealous than holy.

Whoever comes forward therefore, to renovate any one branch of Christian ethics, even though it be on defective principles, should meekly be listened to, and the movement which he originates should be considered, so far as it may extend, as if it were—which it may in fact be, an admonition from the Lord, calling upon all “to do their first works,” and to repent of any remissness, or unfaithfulness, with which they may be chargeable.

It is trite to say that, while the human mind continues what it is, men must differ, not merely in taste and intellectual preferences, but even in some of those matters of belief which should be under the control of mere reason: the supposition of an age of uniformity is therefore chimerical; but the supposition—nay, the positive hope of an age of Christian concord, and

of cordial combination is not chimerical; for it is identical with the belief of the truth of Christianity itself, and of its triumph in the world.

But when this era of Christian harmony commences, and when Christian men become "of one mind, and of one heart," there will take place, as we cannot doubt, a surprising reflux of feeling toward the great matters of morality. The serious obligations of justice, temperance, purity, and charity, will then be felt in another manner; and will come home to the conscience, not merely as *realities*, but almost as *novelties*; and Christian men will be fain to think that, heretofore, they have been dreaming.

Ever must it be true that Christian virtue is the direct product of Christian Truths; but then, when these are no longer held in agitation, they will take their effect, and produce their fruits, with an abundance not heretofore imagined. More than two or three passages of Scripture, bearing upon the exact retributions of a future life, might be referred to, which hitherto have, in a manner, slept on the sacred page; while eager controversies on points less nearly connected with our welfare, have engaged all attention. It cannot be doubted that these ominous intimations are to have their turn, and to take the place due to them in the minds of Christians. When thus regarded, Christian morals may assume almost a new aspect.

That we have not misunderstood the Christian morality, as intended to work its effects by the latent



operation of great principles rather than by the force of precepts and prohibitions, appears from the remarkable quality of our Lord's method of teaching morals—namely, that of enouncing principles of conduct in such a form as absolutely to exclude the supposition that he intended to deliver positive enactments.

In each instance some principle of his divine morality is presented to us, so stated or so exemplified, as that it can be available for our guidance, only as illustrating *a principle*; and so as to imply what would be incompatible with other precepts, or even plainly immoral, if it were understood in any other manner. “Unless a man hate his father and his mother, he cannot,” says Christ, “be my disciple.” Who can for a moment imagine that this, and many similar injunctions, are positive laws, or statutes absolute? As well give a literal import to his injunction to “eat his flesh, and drink his blood.”

If it were objected that, in thus reading our Lord's system of morals, we are lowering the import of his commands, we reply that we are not lowering, but rather heightening it; for we give these precepts a far more comprehensive interpretation, by this means; and send them in upon the centre of the moral faculties—upon the conscience, instead of leaving them to rankle, as otherwise they must do, upon the surface, where they can effect no good.

In all sincerity, and inasmuch as, without intending offence to any, we must allow our argument to take effect where it may, we should here advert to that



error in ethics which has been the besetting fault of many seriously-minded persons, in every age ;—we mean that of frittering down the evangelic principles of morality, into specific precepts, which, in that form, are either impracticable, or frivolous. What is the consequence? Thus understood—or rather, misunderstood, the law of Christ is made to stand opposed, not to the bad customs of the world, but to the very constitution of society ; and is made to forbid, with equal sternness, what is indifferent or innocent, and what is unquestionably vicious. But nothing tends so certainly to merge the distinction between good and evil, as to prohibit things indifferent, or apparently so, with a Draco's severity. In truth this method of literally interpreting our Lord's moral discourses, offers to the world so grotesque a portraiture of Christianity, that it is likely to be regarded as nothing better than a system of punctilious scrupulosities, and frivolous evasions.

“The words that I speak unto you,” said our Lord, “are spirit and truth.” And have not all facts established his conclusion—that “the letter indeed killeth, but the spirit giveth life ;” for in every case in which men of an ardent and serious temper have taken up the letter instead of the spirit of Christian morality, they themselves, or their immediate successors, have fallen, as we might say, lifeless, into the arms of formality ;—each generation becoming more and more forgetful of vital truths.

But now, if Christianity, as a scheme of morals, is intended to produce its effect rather by principles than precepts, we reach our second position; namely, that it does so by its **ONENESS OF PRINCIPLE**; or its **CONCENTRATION OF MOTIVES**. Christian morality is an emanation—not from two or more centres, but from one.

Is it not a fact, well understood in the philosophy of human nature, that, wherever we find a high degree of moral energy, of any kind, and whether it be good or evil in itself, it is always the energy of concentration? Force, in conduct and character, whether it be benevolent or malignant, is the force of Unity, or the sovereignty of a single motive, or of a balance of motives, well combined. True is it in morals, that “a double-minded man”—a man acting, now from the impulse of one motive, now from that of another—“is unstable in all his ways”—easily diverted from his path, or as easily overthrown upon it. Ought we not therefore to look for this same concentration in the morality of Christ? If it is to be full of force—if it is to be a principle of power, and equal to the services and sacrifices of the Christian life, it must possess this characteristic.

What remains then is to seek the true centre of Christian morals;—to find its law of concentration. Having found it, we shall do better to leave it full in view, and boldly expressed in a few words, than to dilate it in a lengthened discussion. This then must be the characteristic of Christian morality—That it springs all from one centre; and that centre the same

which is the centre of all light and warmth in the scheme of Christian doctrine.

If indeed man be capable of generous and happy emotions, and if it be only when acting under the influence of such emotions that he puts forth whatever energy his individual constitution may admit of, then it is certain that no principle of duty which does not deeply touch the emotions of love and gratitude, can become a principle of concentration, or be of avail to bring forth the entire power of the character.

It is thus that a generous motive, ruling the mind, even if it be a very faulty one, and liable perhaps to the condemnation of the moralist, nevertheless is found to carry men further in arduous and perilous services than they are ever carried by a mere sense of duty. What sort of virtue is that which springs from, and is always regulated by a calculation of consequences, turning in upon the man's insulated welfare—or upon what he supposes to be his welfare? This is not morality—but arithmetic. Nor do we hesitate to affirm that a community would have more to fear, in which such a principle were to prevail, and to be openly and generally recognised and formally taught, than one in which morals were actually at a very low ebb, while yet the true principle of virtue was in theory admitted; for it is clearly better that men should still be men, even though bad, than that they should have become mere automatons of selfishness.

There may be other, and loftier motives of virtue, less to be condemned than the atheistic

doctrine of expediency, and which may in fact go far in carrying men through the duties of common life unblamably ; but, failing in warmth and animation, and not so springing from the centre of the moral faculties as to embrace and harmonize its emotions, they are little to be accounted of;—they are *moralities*, not *virtue* ; for virtue is one ; nor can it be such, if it allow any principal element of our nature to remain in a dormant condition, or if it repress the free exercise of any.

The Truths, which in the preceding Lecture were affirmed to be of the very substance of Christianity, being assumed as certain, how can they be regarded otherwise than as the ground or reason of the motives of Christian morality ?—they must, if they are believed to be true. Can they be cordially admitted, and yet take any other position than the highest in our regard, or affect us in any other than the most sovereign manner ?

Christian virtue then, can be nothing less than a concentrated love, or devotion of the soul to the service of Him to whom we owe, not natural life merely, but spiritual life. Christian morality is an affectionate loyalty to Him who, besides that He is our rightful sovereign, has acquired every claim to our duty and affection by having exchanged positions with us, when we were “ without help,” and under condemnation.

Unless we had been guilty and helpless, no such intervention as that which the Christian scheme supposes, could have had place. But if the ruin



of man, and his recovery by the personal intervention of the divine Saviour be both true, then must it be granted that thenceforward genuine Christian virtue, while it is deepened and chastised by a recollection of the misery whence we have been rescued, is warmed, and receives a boundless impulse from an affection, directed with the distinctness of personal love, toward the Saviour, and who is now become, by every title, the sovereign of the heart.

By the most direct inference, the one motive of affectionate loyalty, and a humble expectation of winning the approval of Him who is Supreme in our regards, must be held sufficient to sustain our constancy in any service, which that Sovereign is known to approve, or which we believe will be graciously accepted by Him at our hands. And not only services, but sufferings “for Christ’s sake,” even to the endurance of fiery trials, and death, have often, from the same motive, been stripped of their terrors.

What more then can we need in behalf of the most comprehensive, or of the most refined scheme of morals, than is fully secured by this motive of loyalty to a sovereign—such as is the Saviour of the world?

From the evangelic history is drawn the IDEA of all that is beautiful in virtue; and from the preceptive parts of the Scriptures the explicit rules of morality; and from the doctrinal parts, the impulsive principle of affectionate obedience. With a system of ethics, itself faultless as a definite rule, may it not be affirmed, that a loving loyalty to such a sovereign, at

once Teacher and Saviour, embraces every motive that can tend to secure a correspondent moral harmony and completeness, in the conduct and temper of his subjects and disciples? The Christian ethics, thus made to relate to the personal character and will of Christ, has in a high degree that *concentration* and oneness of motive, which is needed to give force and simplicity to virtue. A generous animation, and a tender affection, a well defined personal sentiment, fixed on one whose own moral elevation leaves nothing that is great, pure, or beautiful, to be added to it or even imagined, give to Christian morality a power and warmth, to which no other system makes any approach.

The simplest possible test may be applied to the motive and rule of Christian morality as thus stated. Let any one, after furnishing his mind with a distinct conception of the personal character of Christ, compel himself to bring his own conduct, dispositions, and converse, throughout any one day, to this gauge, namely, its supposed conformity, in principle, with what we may call the *style* of our Lord's behaviour. This criterion will be found to reach to the extent of the most arduous and unusual duties, as well as to fit the most ordinary. If we are compelled to grant that the application of such a test would carry us forward always toward whatever is pure, and just, and kind, have we not virtually granted that Christianity is divine?

What then remains is to give impulse to the rule we acknowledge to be good. And this must be

by admitting into the heart, in all its power, that faith which connects the soul with the Saviour, by the vital agency of the Spirit of grace. Then it is that abstract virtue becomes embodied, and lives. The office of the Holy Spirit, as we learn by the apostolic word is—"to take of the things of Christ"—whatever is *his distinctively*, and "to reveal them to us." In other words, to expand the divine pattern of all perfection before our contracted faculties, part by part, as we are able to receive it;—to convey to us the lesson of perfection, in morsels, and to render us, by a gradual process of assimilation, "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

But this office of the Holy Spirit has its own peculiar tendency to promote the purification of the heart. How impressive is the apostolic appeal to Christians, "what! know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you?" and again, the injunction not "to grieve the Holy Spirit." It is when Christianity is spiritually understood, and when whatever tends to substitute symbols for realities is rejected, that a trinitarian faith is brought to bear with effect upon the understanding, the heart and the life. If this faith be doubtfully or distrustfully held, is it any wonder that it is found to be ineffective? or if it be held in conjunction with notions which either oppress the heart, or which favour the propensity to rest in formalities, then ought we to suppose it can exhibit its proper influence?

But we are speaking of a spiritual and cordial



trinitarian faith, and then we affirm it to be the basis of the only virtue which deserves the name—a serious, reverential, happy, and affectionate devotion of the whole nature to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christian virtue is the habit, the motive, and the act of the soul meditating upon “the love of God,” and “the grace of the Lord Jesus,” and enjoying “the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

Let it be remarked, that apostolic trinitarian doctrine—so utterly unlike the crabbed definitions of a wrangling and unevangelic age, brings the inscrutable mystery of the divine nature to bear immediately upon the affections, under an aspect of *pleasurable emotion*. How little has this been regarded by angry disputants!—How grievously have those misunderstood apostolic orthodoxy, who have pursued each other to the death, because not consenting to the same jargon as themselves! We cannot too attentively regard the apostolic method of teaching this great truth—of shedding it into the heart. Our CREED, if derived from the Scriptures, speaks to us of “the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the *love* of God, and of the *communion* of the Holy Ghost.” This is the orthodoxy which, when cordially entertained, impels Christians to love each other and all men, and to abound in good works, as sacrifices and offerings, with which “God is well pleased.”

But it is reasonably asked—if such be the intensity and excellence of the motives which you affirm to spring from an evangelic faith, how do you explain



the frequent and lamentable instances in which those who adopt these motives, and talk of them perpetually, are found wanting in the first duties of morality, and guilty even of outraging its plainest requirements? Nothing is more simple: such persons, and the number of such is never small, and in times of formality or of controversial agitation, like the present, it will be large—such persons, unhappily, while they have surrendered their hold of the common, or as they would term them, of the worldly and unevangelic motives of virtue, are very far from having come into any real communion with those motives of which they so fluently speak. They are in fact unprovided with *any* efficacious motives of conduct; and they fall, while those less doctrinally enlightened than themselves, stand: they are, in fact, the easiest of all the victims of temptation:—if the first assault upon virtue be repelled from fear of shame, or from mere habit;—the second, or the third, prevails over the feeble resistance of a morality which has no basis, and no vitality. But when we speak of the efficacy of the principles of Christian morals, we must mean, assuredly, nothing less than the actual possession of that motive, which we affirm to be the impulse of all virtue. A thousand instances of failure and delinquency, among the professors of evangelic principles, prove only that the *profession* was all that had been attained by the individual.

It is manifest that a principle of morals so specific and peculiar as the one we have named, cannot exist in power apart from a clear recognition of that prime

truth of Christianity whence immediately it springs. Any doctrine, therefore, the tendency of which is to throw obscurity upon this first article of belief—Justification through faith in the propitiatory work of Christ; or any religious practice, the effect of which is to mingle what is human with what is divine, in the matter of our acceptance with God, must operate, so far, to chill the religious affections, and to bring Christian morality, in the same proportion, down to the level of that morality which is unchristian—whether philosophic, or superstitious. It is on this ground, therefore, that we claim, without hesitation, the ethical beauty of Christianity, as proper and peculiar to an evangelic faith; because every element of Christian virtue bears relation to a correspondent element of Christian doctrine; and whatever darkens the one, enfeebles the other.

A motive of virtue, so far as it may be peculiar, will express itself in its own manner. The results of two motives, themselves differing greatly, will not be the same. Now the Christian morality, specified as such in the New Testament, has this very peculiarity, which we should look for, if indeed its principle be the one we have named. Most remarkable is it, that though our Lord, before his having accomplished the work of redemption, refers but incidentally to the great evangelic truth which was to be ratified by his death and resurrection; yet precludes all misunderstanding as to the principle of the system of morals which he was giving to the world, by very clearly resting the validity or accept-

ableness of even the most ordinary act of kindness or humanity, on the fact of its having been performed from a motive of affection toward himself; and by declaring that he regards any want of sympathy toward his suffering members, in this peculiar light, as being an affront to himself.

As is the principle of virtue, so are its expressions. All benevolence toward mankind at large, if it be Christian benevolence, is the love of man, for Christ's sake, even as of those who are redeemed by his precious blood. Can it be doubted then that the Christian's affection toward his Christian brethren must have the same peculiarity, and possess it in the most decisive manner; or that any want of this specific affection, or any backwardness in the expression of it, toward Christ's disciples, is a grave fault, a fault rendering very ambiguous, to say the best, our personal Christianity?

And now let us remember that although Christianity *be* a religion of principles rather than of precepts—yet it *has* its precepts;—it has a law—a law summarily containing all law—the royal law of love, and of love among Christians, *as such*. “If any man love God, let him love his brother also.” “This is my command,” said the Saviour—a command given before his sufferings, and issued anew from his throne in the heavens, “that ye love one another.”

He who abstained from prohibiting some things which we cannot doubt he intended to exclude from his church, and who left many things unsaid which



we are forward to put into his lips, He has said— That those who are wanting in love to their Christian brethren are not to be accounted his disciples.

Under every code of law and system of morals, however well defined it may be in its principles, or skilfully expounded in its particular applications, occasions must frequently be presented, by the ever-varying aspects of human affairs, in which some single enactment seems to contravene another; or in which a general principle of law is apparently intercepted in its operation by some positive prohibition. Now this being an inconvenience to which every institution wherein man acts a part must be liable, a universal necessity arises for admitting a rule of adaptation, by the aid of which the social machine may be exempted from ruinous collisions of part with part. Such a rule must have respect to the manifest intention, or the spirit, of the code or institution, considered as a whole; or to the known and recorded mind of the legislator; or to some broad principle of expediency.

In any such instance it is to be assumed that some things are of supreme importance; while some are important relatively only, or conditionally; and that whatever comes under this latter description should give way, rather than that a sovereign axiom, or an absolute and wide-extending precept should be dishonoured.

The application of these unquestionable principles to the Christian Institute, and to the conduct of Christians, one toward another, is obvious. The law



of Christ, which enjoins his followers first to love each other fervently, and without reserve or disguise ; and then to recognise each other *as Christians*, and to abide in communion one with another, is the most explicit of all his commands ;—it is the law the most solemnly promulgated ; it is the law that is reiterated oftener than any other.—It is a law announced as a universal rule of the Christian institute ; and therefore always to be respected, rather than any enactment, less comprehensive, which may at any time seem to clash with it.

Moreover this law, not only of love, but of communion, or of *visible fellowship*, is declared to be the one CHARACTERISTIC of the Christian institute ; and submission to it is made the condition at once of Christ's promised presence with his church, and of the conversion of the world by the means of the church.

Ought not those then to look well to the course they are pursuing, who, on the plea of a conscientious regard to some special enactment, or of their adherence to some institution which, at the most, is but a means to an end, are, and in a deliberate manner, putting contempt upon Christ's first Law—his universal and sovereign will ; and on such ground are either refusing to recognise and to consort with other Christians ; or are even denying the very name to those whose only alleged fault is their error (if it be an error) on the particular in question ?

Whoever it is that pursues such a course, we cannot hesitate to speak of it as in the highest degree

culpable and perilous. It is the fault of these, our times;—a fault from which, however, multitudes of Christians *individually* stand clear, by the warmth and expansiveness of their personal sentiments, and the (genuine) liberality of their modes of action. But as to communities, not one can well claim exemption from some blame on this behalf.

But if the most absolute of Christ's laws be publicly dishonoured by Christian bodies; and if, in the eye of the world, the mark of unity and love be wanting, the serious question presents itself, Whether it may be allowable to claim for any body of Christians, as such, the praise of possessing and of "holding forth" that Spiritual Christianity of which we are speaking?

We shall excuse ourselves from the task of distinctly replying to so weighty a question—content to know that, in whatever way it might be answered by the champions of parties, Christ's law of love is in fact cordially accepted, and visibly honoured too, by no small number of individual Christians, within each department of the orthodox and evangelic commonwealth. Even if the *visible*, or ecclesiastical condition of the Christian community be not auspicious, happily its *interior* condition (so we fully believe) is of a far more cheering character; and is such as may safely be held to indicate the approach of a better exterior, as well as interior mode of combination.

A decisive improvement of this sort, or a renovation of the *visible*, as well as of the interior

condition of the Christian body, giving open honour to Christ's great command, is what remains to be expected as the final development of the energies of the Gospel; and which must precede, and would bring in, its general triumph in the world.

To have undertaken to speak of the *ethical* characteristics of Spiritual Christianity with an intention to abstain from all allusion to that great characteristic of Christian morals—Christian love, would have been to compromise momentous truths in a most culpable manner. Or to have brought forward this leading subject, yet with a timid determination to be blind and deaf as to what is passing around us; and by all means to avoid the peril of offending any prejudices, would have been to put to shame the profession we have more than once made of independence and conscientious impartiality.

But it would have been in a very peculiar sense blameworthy to adopt any such temporizing rule of discretion in *the present instance*, when the task which we are engaged to attempt, is—to exhibit the glory and beauty of Christianity as it is found in the inspired writings;—not as it may happen to be represented, at a particular time, by this or that community. Moreover, we are to perform this task with an especial view to the feelings and opinions of those who are presumed not hitherto to have so fully considered the momentous subject of the divine origin of the Gospel, as would give it its due influence over their convictions.

Now there can be no doubt that, with very many



persons of this class—intelligent, observant, and candid, who yet are not intimately acquainted, and perhaps not in any degree acquainted with the personal sentiments of Christian people, the scandal of those religious dissensions which of late have become so obtrusive, operates to excuse them to themselves from the duty of seriously considering the claims of the Gospel. If we could only bring to view the secret causes of that infidelity which, it is to be feared, prevails among the educated classes, this now named—the scandal arising from religious dissensions, would probably appear to be one of the most frequent and determinative.

The advocates of Christianity are no doubt entitled to the argument they so often resort to, in their controversy with its opponents, when they affirm that the religion of Christ is rejected because it reproves a vicious course of life. This is true, but it is only a partial truth; and it would be well if, whenever it is advanced, a candid acknowledgment were made of the unquestionable fact, that it is the “envy, wrath, strife, malice,” and ambition, seen to attach to religious bodies, quite as much as the pride, or covetousness, or sensuality harbouring in the bosom of the infidel, that prevent his submission to an argument which he finds himself unable logically to refute.

Such persons—we mean the intelligent, observant, and candid, who hold out against the Christian evidences on the plea of the unseemly discords of professed Christians, are invited to take a wider grasp of this particular subject.



Let such persons maturely consider, first, the obvious fact that Christianity *itself* condemns as decisively the evil tempers generated by religious disagreements, as it condemns any other immoralities: clearly itself is a religion of love and meekness; and moreover it contains (however little they have hitherto been regarded) sufficient, and very precise provisions, securing to Christians liberty of conscience, while cordial fellowship is not disturbed. The religion of Christ should therefore bear none of the blame accruing from religious strifes.

But the persons now intended are especially requested to give attention to those views of Christian history which have several times been referred to in the course of these Lectures.—Church history is the story of the perpetually renewed struggles of Truth, Justice, Purity, Love, not merely with the bad passions of men individually, nor merely with false and immoral principles, in the abstract; but with the definite and visible forms under which those bad passions, or these immoral principles have, from time to time, appeared, as digested and conventional evils, attaching to the social system.

With several of these prescriptive mischiefs Christianity has wrestled, and has prevailed over them; nor ever again, probably, shall it meet these its antagonists, erect. With some others—slavery for instance, and the hateful prejudice of colour, it is now, and before our eyes contending, nor can any who have attentively watched its preceding victories over the most formidable and deeply intrenched evils,

doubt what must be the issue of the contest which is now in progress.

We come then to our immediate subject. It is clear that, unless the natural course of human affairs were miraculously diverted; or, in other words, unless a direct administration of whatever relates to religion, by Heaven's infallible agents—such as the papal system assumes for itself, were supposed—the conservation of dogmatic truth, and the clear definition of it, in all its details, could not well be secured otherwise than by the free oppositions of minds differently constituted, and differently schooled; and by the unchecked collisions of bodies, independent and separately powerful. Truth has miserably suffered whenever such oppositions and collisions have been successfully prevented by the hand of despotic spiritual power. Absolutely excluded they have never been, nor can be; but they go on with little advantage to truth, and with incalculable damage to the social system, and with great disturbance to civil affairs, when the two contending parties are in the relative positions of tyrants and martyrs. Who can wish this inevitable conflict, by which truth is conserved, to be maintained under conditions so terrible, so precarious, and so costly?

But the *other* form of this contest is that which attaches to the present condition of civil society, and under which the deep religious convictions of minds, diversely constituted, and more diversely trained, are suffered to work and to heave, exempted from any external restraints. This then is the dispensation

through which we are now passing;—a dispensation indeed of peculiar trial to the constancy and temper of Christian men, as well as of sad scandal toward the irreligious many. Yet is it to a great extent, as we have said, remedied, or its ill effects obviated, by the individual piety and devout sentiments of multitudes of private Christians. These individuals are so many, and the feeling among them so decisively tends toward a happier condition which should allow of an unintercepted fellowship of love, that the actual approach of it seems to be more than dimly indicated.

The season of unrestrained dissension, with all its evils, when it shall have had its time and fulfilled its purpose, in the elucidation and establishment of dogmatic truth, shall pass away, and the great and characteristic principle of the Gospel—its law of love, shall then—just as the other moral energies of the same Gospel have successively expanded their forces, and have triumphed—triumph also itself, as well in the bosoms of Christians individually, as in the Christian commonwealth, and visibly exhibit on earth the pattern of the order and unity of heaven.

THE  
FOURTH LECTURE.

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SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY THE HOPE OF THE WORLD  
AT THE PRESENT MOMENT.





#### THE FOURTH LECTURE.

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WHILE showing, as we propose now to do, that the principles of Spiritual Christianity, Doctrinal and Ethical, and which have been advanced in the preceding Lectures, furnish the ground of a bright hope of a much improved moral condition of the human family, we shall carefully abstain from resting our argument upon questionable anticipations of any kind, whether political, philosophical, or such as might be derived from interpretations of unfulfilled Scripture prophecies.

What we now propose is very simple, and our argument is direct, and our conclusion scarcely to be disputed, if only those principles are granted to be true, which already we have insisted upon as sufficiently established.

We take up then, in turn, three or four of those elements of Spiritual Christianity which attach to it as an impulse of action; and after briefly exhibiting each, in its connexion with the truths whence it springs, shall ask whether, supposing such motives or principles powerfully to affect the hearts of Chris-

tians, throughout a community, they would not afford a ground of the very happiest anticipations which the philanthropist can entertain for the world at large?

We shall advance into the midst of our argument, after briefly adverting to two subjects, directly related to it, and which at the present moment are of urgent importance. The first of these is the slender and very questionable value of any other hope than that which Christianity furnishes, of seeing the welfare of the human family materially promoted, either in a physical or a moral sense.

Does it appear that Civilization *alone*, with its intercourse and traffic—its arts, and its “useful” sciences—its town-crowding industry, and its disorderly peopling of wildernesses—its hurry, and impatience of restraint—its intensity of individual will, and its contempt of authority—its uncontrollable sway of the masses—its unlooked-for upturns and reverses—its passionate pursuit of momentary advantages, and its appetite for such gratifications as may be snatched in all haste;—does it appear that civilization *alone* (Christian influence not considered) is likely much to promote the personal and home-felicity of the millions it is summoning into life? Judging of what is future, from what we see around us, dare we look to mere civilization as worthy to be trusted with the moral, or even with the physical well-being of the human family; and with the guardianship of the generation next coming up?—Dare we, if we had the infant human race in our arms—dare we turn ourselves to that care-worn personage, our modern

Civilization, sitting at her factory gate, and say to her—"Take this child, and nurse it for me?"

It is indeed by no means easy, either to define correctly what we mean by civilization, a term vaguely embracing a vast assemblage of heterogeneous elements;—or completely to sever, in our minds, the notion of mere civilization, from that of those moral and religious influences which, in fact, are, in this country, so intimately blended with every thing around us.

The nearest approach, perhaps, which we could make to a distinct conception of what civilization is, as severed from all Christian influences, would be effected by going into the heart of some of the continental communities;—might we, without offence, say France, where, while all the elements of national improvement, in wealth, science, literature, refinement, are in high activity, the concomitant influence of Christianity, though not absolutely wanting, is reduced to the smallest dimensions imaginable, if it is to exist at all.

In looking then to mere civilization as exhibited in a country like France, we must affirm that the issue of the social movement, considered as tending to promote the personal and domestic well-being of the mass of the people, is altogether ambiguous, and such as may give ground, with an equal appearance of reason, to the darkest, as to the brightest anticipations. And then if we were to look to such a country as a centre of benevolent endeavours for the diffusion of happiness through the world, could we name any



definite grounds of hope, whatever, in this respect ? Or is it not nearly as reasonable to suppose that light, truth, peace, humanity, should emanate from China, as from France, and thence cover the earth ?

In referring to this particular instance, we are influenced by no national prejudice ; and in truth would entertain the hope that France, admitting at length Christian Truth, may yet awake, to run abreast with England—as in wealth, philosophy, literature, so in the enlightened labours of universal philanthropy. But if so, it will not be as a *civilized*, but as a Christianized country, that she will do it.

Mere Civilization is too likely to ally herself to that atheistic and sensual philosophy which comports so well with the temper and aims of a commercial people. We mean the philosophy which regards man simply as one of the mammalia, and as distinguished from others of his order only by a loftier facial angle, by some ounces more of the cerebral mass, by the jointing of his thumb, and by the possession of a heel bone. But how is such a union—such a *conspiracy*, to be deprecated ! Too soon might busy Civilization, bent on gain, take Animal Philosophy into her establishment, as the most compliant and serviceable of her creatures ; and this shrewd minion, teaching her mistress to blush at no well calculated and undoubtedly profitable cruelty, would undertake to prove that those who draw prizes in the lottery of life are unwise if they spoil their peace by any compunctious sympathies toward the less fortunate millions of the species.

If we imagine all Christian feeling and Christian truth to be withdrawn, the present is a time of high intensity indeed, in the social system ; but of very low moral temperature ; nor can we confide in any disposition which is the proper growth of such a time, as *an impulse of benevolence*, or as affording any ground of hope for the melioration of the lot of man.

But we turn to the second of those subjects which we mentioned as incidental to our argument. This is the altogether peculiar position which we, the people of England, at this passing moment occupy, in relation to the human family. Has not the part of an Elder Brother of this great family actually fallen upon the English race ? and have not the solitudes of such a relationship actually become ours ? Are we not by many interests, and by motives higher than any interests, compelled, in some measure, nay to a great extent, to think for all, to care for all, to defend the weak, to forefend the strong ; and is there not now pervading the people of this country, even as a temper which has become characteristically British, a kindly sympathy in what affects the welfare of each race of the human family ;—such a feeling, at least, as has never belonged to any other people, in any age ? If many partake not at all of any such feeling, they are fewer than those who are alive to it in a good degree.

With all the paths of the world now mapped before us, and with means of communication which, for practical ends, condense the population of the earth, as if the thousand millions were crowded upon a ball

of one third the diameter; and with actual colonial possession of a large portion of the earth, and with moral possession, by high character and repute, of almost the whole of it; and with all these uncalculated and untried means of influence now ripened, and presented afresh to our hands, who is it that can altogether control those mingling emotions of patriotism and of expansive benevolence, which become us, occupying as we do a position, whence we may go forth to conquer the world, not for ambition, not for wealth; but for Truth and Peace!

And as we do stand in this position, and as we do, in so great a measure, entertain the feelings proper to it; so is there a reciprocity of feeling widely diffused among the nations.—British *political* influence or national supremacy apart, the British feeling—its honour, its justice, and its humanity, are in fact understood in the remotest regions, and are trusted to by tribes whose names we have not yet learned to pronounce. The several designations by which English benevolence, in its various forms styles itself, have, as watch-words of hope, traversed the ocean, and have pervaded wildernesses; and these titles of our organized philanthropy have already wakened the dull ear of half civilized continents, and are reverberated from the hill-sides of the remotest barbarism.

It is true that England is looked to, as the helper, guardian, guide, of the nations. And assuredly it is the CHRISTIANITY of England which gives depth, substance, life, to her repute through the world, as the lover of justice, and the mover of good.



But whatever England may yet do, or may fail to do, for the world ; it is to Christianity itself that we look as containing the only impelling motives of an effective philanthropy.

Neither the vastness of the field that is before us in this instance, nor the variety of the objects it embraces, should be allowed to confuse our apprehensions of what is in itself very simple. In relation to any hope of amendment, or to the principles which should be relied upon in our endeavours to effect it, the human family is but as—a single family ; the community of nations is but as—a numerous household ; or, that we may exclude objections, let it suffice to say, that whatever is true, and whatever would be practically advisable, if our intention were only to bring about a reform within some small and insulated settlement which had fallen into disorder, is also true, and would be in a practical sense wise to recommend, when it is the millions of this insulated world that we are thinking of.

Human nature is one, whether we take it by fifties, or by millions. Neither fifties nor millions, when fallen from a condition of social order and purity, will renovate themselves spontaneously. But whether it be a smaller or a larger community that is wisely cared for, and taught, and aided, the fruit of such labours will in due time appear.

To simplify then, as much as possible our present course of inquiry, let us imagine that we have before us a colony of very limited extent—the two or three hundred families of a remote settlement ; and that,



in visiting them, we find some of these families to have sunk, through neglect and untoward events, into the most abject state of destitution, ignorance, and vice; while those less degraded, and who are enjoying the comforts of wealth, seem in a very slight degree conscious of the wretchedness which surrounds them; or at least are little disposed to attempt any methods of remedy.

Now, putting out of view the political or legal provisions we might wish to introduce, for effecting the restoration of such a colony; let us imagine a doctrine which, if we could but give it universal currency and credit, would at once operate as an invigorating medicine, administered to a languishing patient, in restoring vital energy to the social body. We find a large portion of this community fallen into a condition of wretchedness which renders them the objects of scorn, and of consequent ill-treatment, from others; and which breeds, in their own bosoms, a desponding apathy, and robs them of all self-respect and healthful activity.

As the remedy of these evils, we preach a doctrine which, without flattering self-love or inspiring insolence, confers upon *every individual* of this community—young and old, and however degraded, a hitherto unthought of importance; and which challenges every soul as the rightful claimant by birth of certain high prerogatives. Let but this doctrine be received by all as undoubtedly founded in fact; and then, although the inequality of conditions is not merged, the rich and the powerful learn to respect

their less fortunate brethren ; while these learn—what is indispensable to any reformation—to respect themselves. The promulgation of this doctrine introduces a new era, and will probably be of more efficacy in dispelling abject poverty and vice, than any political reforms that can be thought of.

### I.

What we need then for the renovation of the human family is—the spread of that life-giving doctrine which we find in the Scriptures, and which challenges the abject and the wretched, universally, and unexceptively, as the heirs of immortality, and as individually embraced in the intention of the Gospel.

It follows from this doctrine that men, even the vilest, are no more to be contemned;—for the Almighty does not condemn them :—they are no longer to be forgotten, or despotically abused, or selfishly despaired of ; for the Son of God has redeemed them. On the contrary ; they must now singly, and at whatever cost, be sought out, instructed, cared for, and succoured.

We ask only that a doctrine such as this should be heartily embraced by Christian nations, and should be carried out wherever such nations are coming in contact with barbarous and semi-barbarous races : must it not become a mighty energy, tending, directly and certainly, to the renovation of the world ?

With the eye steadily fixed upon some loathsomely abject or ferocious race, the veriest outcasts of the

human family, let us suppose ourselves to listen to the proclamation of Heaven, issued in terms such as these—

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Or thus—“God our Saviour will have *all men* to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;” he having “given himself, a ransom *for all*, to be testified in due time.”

We might well be content to leave our argument upon the ground of this single evangelic principle; and, in affirming our position to be certain, that the Redeemer of the world has thus opened the path of life to every child of man, attempt no more. If this be true, the motive of benevolence measures every occasion; nor can its obligations be discharged so long as any of our brethren are unblessed. If this be true, we virtually destroy those whom we do not visit and instruct. No bosom can admit this truth, and remain either abject or selfish.

But let it be understood, that we are neither, at this moment, going about to prove the truth of the principle we name, nor endeavouring to show that this or that zealous endeavour, now on foot to spread the Gospel, must prosper. All we are saying is this—That the Gospel, thus understood, and if warmly embraced, as a motive of conduct, does contain a reason and an impulse, tending directly to carry forth Christianity, and all its present blessings, from land to land, until the human family is every-

where happy ; and it does this by its solemn challenge of every human being, *as its own* : how vile soever by actual condition, every human being is yet precious and honourable as redeemed. In virtue of this great truth, let us find man loathsome as he may be, we yet may not despise, nor abhor, nor neglect him. As a member of the family, he is indeed “dead in Adam ;” but yet is he “alive in Christ.” In respect of every child of man, lost as he may seem, and visibly despicable, the Redeemer, stretching forth his hand in caution, says, “Take heed that ye despise him not.”

Those therefore who give the greatest prominence to the doctrine of redemption, and who hold it and proclaim it in the freest manner, are the truest benefactors to their species. The doctrine which attaches infinite importance to human nature singly, and which declares the condition of each to be yet hopeful, is the effective impulse of philanthropy. Let it only be believed, and the outcasts will be reclaimed. Can philosophy imagine a dogma more auspicious in its tendency than this which confers the highest, and let us grant it, a fearful dignity upon *every human being*, as immortal, and as responsible ; and which opens to him, without a plea of exception, the brightest hopes ? It must be a doctrine such as this, if there be any, that will at once recover him from degradation, and defend him from oppression.

Instead of imagining, or of teaching any such benign doctrine as this, the mood of philosophy has always been contemptuous toward the degraded races



of mankind. Or whatever philanthropy it may have professed, it has set on foot no endeavours to recover the lost. Too often has it connived at the atrocities of which these have been the victims.

The Christian's axiom—That men are individually to be respected, and to be cared for, and that human life and well-being must not be trifled with, is not the maxim of the Despot, whose palace is undermined with dungeons; nor of the Founder of empire and the conqueror of kingdoms, who rears pyramids of human skulls. It is not the maxim of the rapacious trafficker, who amasses mountains of gold by dealing in a drug that poisons the body and soul of millions. Nor is the Christian doctrine, on this head, in any favour with the lovers of pleasure, or with cold sensualists, who never ask at what cost of human misery their gratifications may have been provided. All these parties love to think of men as despicable singly, and despicable in the mass; and, whether to be counted by tens, or by millions, as nothing better than the dust in the balance, when weighed against the desires of pride, or the lust of power, or of animal indulgence.

Not so the Gospel; and if we only assume it to be believed as true, by any one who, at the impulse of selfish passions, may be prompted to trample upon the well-being or comfort of his fellows, he hears that awful warning, directed to himself—"It were better for a man that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the depths of the sea—it were better for a man never to have been born, than

that he should despise or offend one of the least of those for whom Christ died." This may not indeed stay the oppressor in his course; but it tends to do so; and it will, if opinion around him be free, and Christianlike.

Inasmuch as contempt for himself is at once the parent and the offspring of misery to the individual, so is contempt for others the prompter of all crimes. But convey into the heart of the wretched this Gospel truth, which shows him his own religious dignity, and he starts from the earth; or lodge it in the conscience of the oppressor, and he is staggered in the execution of his purpose.

But we may easily make proof of the tendency and efficacy of our principle, by applying it to instances always near at hand. Governed by an undoubting belief of what Christianity affirms concerning every human being, let us penetrate some of those caverns of woe which undermine (literally and metaphorically undermine) our great towns. And, when pleasure and business have had their dues, let us enter the home—home, alas! can it be called?—of our brother, whom hitherto we have not thought of as such. Let us learn from his own lips, what he, and his, endure from day to day; and have endured through the round of our smiling years. And let us listen, either while he recounts his dull variety of present miseries, or while he tells of the utter neglect of his infancy, of the destitution, and the thoughtless crimes of his childhood, of the infamy of his youth, of the wild desperation and enormity of his manhood; and now

of the sullen anguish of his last years of utter wretchedness. And yet this our brother, whom we find as a broken vessel, cast forth and abhorred, was formed like ourselves capable of enjoyment, which he has never tasted but as poison ; and capable of virtue too, of which he has known nothing but such a rumour as remorse may have whispered in his tortured ear. It is true that even he was formed for happiness, and for virtue ; and—if the Gospel be true, he is still capable of both ; and even now might his ear be wakened by the alarms of mercy ; and even now might he hear the voice that speaks from heaven —“ Arise thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give *thee* life.” Even might this, our abject brother be regained, and be taught to set out in our company on the road to Heaven. If the Gospel be true, all this is true ; and moreover, if *we believe it to be true*, it will impel us thus to seek him that was lost, and to soothe his withered soul with the sounds of grace which ourselves have listened to.

Whether true or not, is not now our question ; but we affirm that, if thoroughly believed to be true—this evangelic principle, which confers dignity upon the meanest of the human race, and opens hope before the most sunken eye, does include a substantial, efficacious means, directly and powerfully tending to raise the fallen, and to diffuse happiness.

The same religious regard to the welfare of whoever shares with us the hopes of immortality, and which impels the missionary to follow the track of savage hordes, and prompts labours of charity nearer

home, yet hardly less arduous—this feeling, if brought into the family circle, imparts a new and more serious conviction of duty to the course we pursue in promoting the highest good of our children; for if it be reasonable to send missionaries to the opposite hemisphere, at so great cost and risk, how unreasonable to be remiss in training those most dear to us, in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord!” And the same principle forbids our regarding our servants as the mere instruments of our convenience; nor, if we admit it, shall we dare to compromise the religious welfare of any whom we employ, from motives of personal advantage or comfort.

Let it now be granted us that this axiom, which puts the seal of God upon the forehead of every human being, does most convincingly prove the Gospel itself to be from Heaven. Is it not, herein, a clear expression of infinite goodness? Many who have rejected the authority of the Scriptures have yet been ready to acknowledge the benign tendency of the ethical system they teach; but few have discerned that still more striking evidence of its divine origin which arises from a consideration of the characteristic article we have here adverted to. Christ commands us “to love our enemies;” but more than this, and of weightier import is the principle which leads the Christian to remember that even his most inveterate enemy may, should God grant him repentance, become his companion through a happy immortality. The mere rule of love, or the verbal precept is almost lost in the depth of the



motive which such a belief inspires. Whoever has acquired the habit of thinking of those around him, individually, as the heirs of immortality, has little more to learn in that department of morals which relates to our duty toward our neighbour.

## II.

If we are thus taught to entertain a religious reverence in regard to the welfare of every member of the human family, it remains to ask, What the quality of those emotions is with which, as Christians, we should labour to promote that welfare?

We reply that these emotions, and in a degree far surpassing any others, are profound and intense; and they are so in proportion to the firmness of our confidence in the reality of the Gospel itself—or, in other words, to our personal piety.

Much and habitual meditation on the vast theme of our own immortality, cannot but bring with it a solicitude, even painfully intense, for the spiritual welfare of others. And as is the personal religious feeling, so is the relative feeling which expresses itself in Christian zeal. The waste places of the world will not be made to blossom, nor will the mephitic dens of superstition ever be fearlessly entered, nor the horrors of savage life encountered, merely because it is abstractedly right that such perils should be met, and such labours undergone. But both the danger and the toil are contemned, when Christian men, who are happily conscious of the divine truth and power of the Gospel, think of

their fellow-men as ignorant of it. It is then that benevolent zeal burns with a steady flame, when evangelists, with the animation of a personal experience of the truth, go forth saying, "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world!"

There is however a peculiarity attaching to the emotions of Christian benevolence, which claims to be noticed. These feelings seem, in truth, to involve a paradox, which we should not leave unexplained.

It might have been thought that a religion the very purport of which is to teach the comparative insignificance of the interests of the present transient life, would almost inevitably induce, so far as it takes effect, an apathy and indifference toward them; and especially so, when it is the temporal welfare of *others*, not of ourselves, that is thought of. How natural to suppose that the adherents of such a religion would be distinguished from other men by their callous disregard of the brief sufferings and wants of those around them! Why should we bestow our pity upon the sorrows of an hour, or employ our hands in relieving necessities which end so early? Much less should we sacrifice our personal religious enjoyments by labours of this kind; or care for the bodily comfort of others, when spiritual contemplation might fully engage us.

In truth, no such cold reasonings of spiritual selfishness have ever been the characteristics of genuine Christian piety. The very contrary is true. This

is a fact which needs not to be proved.—The vast difference between the ancient civilized world, and the modern, turns very much upon it; and in comparing the two states of society, nothing is more remarkable than the incalculably greater extent of that regard which is paid to the bodily sufferings and wants of men in modern, than was paid in ancient times; and this difference is a direct consequence of the influence of Christian motives. It is the believers in a life hereafter who have done almost all that has ever been attempted for assuaging the sorrows, and for enhancing the comforts of men in respect of the life now passing.

The Christian, like his Master, not only has a larger, and a more long-sighted compassion than other men; but a more *sensitive* compassion also—a pity more quick and prompt—a pity of nicer tact, and a more generous and gentle sympathy, employing itself, not merely upon those evils which are ominous of remote ruin; but upon those which must become extinct in the grave.

What are the facts which every day exemplify these assertions? The very persons among us who think with mournful alarm of the spiritual destitution of the heathen world—these persons are those who witness, with the most sensitive indignation, the bodily miseries of oppressed races. The very same hearts which beat with the hope of bringing pagan nations to the knowledge of salvation, these same bosoms thrill with delight while listening to the traveller, who describes the decent happiness of the

once ferocious savage, and the petty comforts and embellishments of his home! In explanation of these facts it is obvious to point to the check which is given to selfishness by the Christian code; and to notice the general warmth which is diffused through the moral faculties by the devout affections. But beyond this, we are to remember that Christian piety very much promotes, and indeed consists in, the habit of connecting the incidents of the present life, from hour to hour, with the well-being of the life to come; and involves a constant recollection of the moral bearing of the present, upon the future. This habit having been formed—a sort of pulsation is maintained—a vital throb, beating forward, every moment, from time into eternity. But then there is a return in this flow—it is a circulation of life; and thus it is that eternity sends back upon the interests of time an undefined, yet weighty sense of its own powers—communicating a serious intensity, and imparting a value, even to the good or ill of an hour. Whatever therefore, belonging to this life, which is not in itself frivolous, or sensual, or sordid—and no human suffering is frivolous, no gentle affection of the heart indifferent—whatever is not so, instead of its exciting *less* sympathy through its relationship to a future life, excites so much the more. The mind, fully penetrated by the deeply-working affections which are its preparation for taking part in the felicity of heaven, and finding them to be pent up within the narrow limits of earth, applies them with—might we say it—a disproportionate spring and force to what-



ever around it is of a quality naturally to excite them.

The more piety, therefore, the more compassion; and the quick sympathies of a Christian heart apply themselves, in easy alternation, now to the spiritual, and now to the temporal necessities of men; and with a oneness of force, or momentum, and with almost the same earnestness of zeal, administer relief, either to the body, or to the soul.

There is a depth of meaning in this fact, considered in connexion with the movements now in progress for evangelizing barbarous and half-civilized races. We invite attention to it from any who, although they may not choose to class themselves with "the religious," would not wish to be thought indifferent to the happiness of their fellows.

Why such persons should not aid Christian missions, on the obvious ground that Christianity carries the blessings of civilization along with it—does not appear. Let us however for a moment admit the plea which such might advance—"That these evangelizing projects are fanatical in principle, and are injudiciously managed; and are therefore very likely to come to a speedy termination." Nevertheless if it were so, it is certain that, under this very agency those regions are being explored where the most horrid usages prevail, by men whose very characteristic it is (whether we think them fanatics or not) to feel more sensitively than others, and much more so than traders or philosophical travellers ever do, the miseries and oppressions which they there witness. From

whom is it that we have derived, during the last thirty years, a competent and specific knowledge of the vilifying influence of the superstitions of India, and of the foul and cruel practices which attach to them? Is it not mainly from Christian missionaries? Even then if it were granted that the overwrought sensibility of some of these reporters has exaggerated the descriptions they have sent home, yet, taken in the mass, such narratives are authentic, and they remain uncontradicted by those from whom we should never have received any such accounts. It is none but men whose feelings have been rendered keen by the religious affections, that could collect these reports:—irreligious men, though they have eyes to see, do not see, though they have ears to hear, do not hear, these things; nor have they hearts seriously to be affected by the miseries of their fellows.

It should therefore be regarded as a circumstance of very peculiar importance—we mean it should so be regarded by all who would be numbered among philanthropists and philosophers, that, at this moment, the world is every where set about, or sentinelled with warm-hearted men, and with tender-spirited women too, whose personal benevolent dispositions have impelled them to undertake such a part; and who are always observing and reporting whatever is cruel, ferocious, impure, and wretched, in those regions where, through a long course of ages, no check whatever has restrained the worst passions of human nature. But at length these “dark places of the earth”—full as they are of “the habitations of cruelty,”

are opened to the inspection of men governed by happier dispositions. We ask then—and we invite a reply to the question—Is not this fact of the mere *inspection* of such regions, by such persons, a great point gained for humanity? and have not the reports which are thus continually furnished, and presented to the civilized world, a direct tendency to bring to bear upon the evils so reported, whatever reliefs or remedies it may be possible to administer to them? Where then are the philanthropists who are backward to hail this modern system of Christian visitation, or to aid in sustaining it?

At the present moment, and with the hearty concurrence of philosophers, scientific establishments are formed in several latitudes, and in both hemispheres, for noting and recording the synchronous pulsations of the magnetic fluid. A worthy engagement we grant. But after all, if what concerns the happiness of man be an end not unworthy of serious regard, do we do well to forget the labours and perils of those who, during the past forty years, have been noting and reporting (what, since the world has been peopled, none have thus reported) the extreme degradations of the human family?

The thus accumulated knowledge of the actual condition of the several races of mankind, constitutes a fund of benevolent excitement, acting always upon sensitive Christian hearts; and so tending to recruit the ranks of evangelic labour. The purely religious desire “to convert the heathen,” and the conviction of duty in this behalf, may be regarded as a constant

force, acting upon Christian minds in an equable manner; but the vivid impression of *present miseries* to be relieved, acts intensely upon the class of minds best adapted to the arduous work of breaking up the barbarism of untutored nations. Thus it is that Christian compassion for *bodily* sufferings, and a Christian zeal for the propagation of Truth, tend in conjunction to diffuse every species of good.

Let it now be imagined that a human eye were suddenly endowed with a microscopic power, reaching far and wide, and embracing at once earth and sky—and the myriads of every inch, and the organs and faculties of each living thing, in all. Nothing in such a prospect would be *exaggeration*: nothing more than mere truth would be presented, even by so multiform and vast a revelation of the organized and conscious world; and, if there were any inference properly arising from such a spectacle, and bearing upon our personal conduct, with what force would it come home to us?

What then are Christian sympathies, and what are the quick sensibilities, and the far-extending anticipations of a Christian heart;—and what is this habit of feeling, as to things present, with a force which borrows impulse from the weight of eternity, what are these habits and sensibilities, as applied to the wide compass of the moral world, but a sort of microscopic power, revealing, at a glance, whatever that circle embraces—both present and future? All that may be suffered, and all that might be enjoyed, by our brethren of the human family, opens itself to



our consciousness, and if our personal agency may be thought to stand in any manner related to this vast range of good or ill, the motives of benevolence admit all the depth and intensity which our feeble nature can at all sustain.

It is not to be supposed that all minds, or that many, could surrender themselves to sensibilities such as these:—but some do in fact thus feel; and some do thus think of what surrounds them; and although they can by no means so govern the emotions of which they are conscious as to be able to give them intelligible expression; yet they do, if well constituted, and if ruled by Christian maxims, so resolve, and so act as to draw many in their train, and to lead forth bands of Christian philanthropy. In every age there have been a few thus to feel; and in an age like the present, which favours the active employment of these deep energies of the soul, men, so moulded, who otherwise might either have smothered their emotions, or have misdirected them toward some purpose of fanaticism, will go forth to carry blessings, wherever man is yet ignorant and unhappy.

### III.

We have seen that Christianity rescues every member of the human family, singly, from contempt, oppression, and wretchedness, by attaching to each an infinite importance, as responsible, and immortal, and as entitled to the benefits of redemption. We

have seen moreover that, to give practical effect to this principle, the Gospel generates sentiments of humanity and compassion, peculiarly vivid, whether excited by the bodily sufferings, or the spiritual destitution of our fellows. But these two distinctions of the religion of Christ are connected with

#### A LAW OF DIFFUSION ;

and we must, in this instance, use the word *law* in both its customary senses, as intending — a *statute*, or sanctioned command ; and an *impulse*, or force, or an established mode of action ; as when we speak of the laws of nature.

Our religion *must* be carried out into all the world ; for its Author has formally and solemnly enjoined his ministers so to promulgate it ; and it *would* be thus propagated ; because those in whose bosoms it resides with power, feel impelled to communicate the happiness they derive from it.

The great fact, several times adverted to in the course of these Lectures, of the slow development of the powers of Christianity, is most signally illustrated in the instance of this, its Law and Impulse of Diffusion. Both took full effect in the apostolic era ; and within a century from the ascension of Christ, his doctrine had been carried, with effect, throughout the area of the Roman world ; and even far beyond it. But from the time when nefarious means were resorted to for grasping a still-pagan population within the arms of the church, by bringing Chris-

tianity itself to the nearest resemblance possible, to the ancient polytheism — from that time onward, little or nothing deserving to be named as an extension of the Gospel, took place during a long series of ages. Nations were varnished with Christian rites — but were not evangelized.

And most remarkable is the continued torpor of this expansive force during the great awakening season of the Reformation. Other principles were then to be developed;—this was to wait its hour. But its hour has come; and England is the theatre of its expansion.

Those who can free themselves from the thrall of *irreligious prejudices* (and no prejudices are more firm in their texture, or more narrow) and who are accustomed to read the future in the past, will not find it easy to resist the belief that a christianizing of the world is to be the consequence of that singular conjuncture of circumstances which makes this country, at the same moment, the centre of colonization, and the centre of the long inert, but now active Law of evangelical diffusion.

It is but incidentally that the evangelizing zeal of these times has sprung out of the commercial and colonial greatness of England. There has indeed been a connexion of causes, running from the one into the other; but the main causes have had an altogether independent origin.

We must be blind to the most conspicuous facts, if we fail to observe so remarkable a combination of tendencies as that to which we now advert.—

After sixteen or seventeen hundred years of an abeyance of the first law of the Christian code, and of the lethargy of its diffusive impulse, that law has at length fixed itself in all consciences, and the impulse has affected all hearts; and this has happened among the most expansive and enterprising of civilized communities, and at a moment when, in various modes, the British stock, name, language, literature, feeling, habits, institutions, are taking possession of every unclaimed area upon the surface of the earth. And it should be observed that pure Christianity, as connected with this national outspread, is, in a very remarkable manner, justifying its characteristic as the “salt of the earth”—or *true conservative principle* of the social system, the operation of which, is, by a silent but efficacious process, tending to secure the highest benefits which the philanthropist can desire. Christianity, felt to be indispensable to what may be called—colonial health, and to the actual preservation of settlements existing under precarious circumstances, will be cherished and sustained, wherever the habits of the settlers are of the kind most likely to render a colony permanently prosperous; while simultaneous settlements, not governed by Christian principles, and within which all the vices of old civilization collapse with the ferocities of savage life, will work their own ruin; for this mixture of the worst elements of the two forms of society, cannot but be self-destructive. Such settlements must run their course—take their fate—and always pressing as they do toward disorder, dispersion, decay, must



ere long become extinct. Colonies which, by renouncing the Gospel and contemning its forms, abandon themselves to the miasmas of those swamps, whereinto the old world drains itself, shall die out; leaving the desecrated wilderness to enjoy its sabbaths, until a company fearing God, comes to redeem the desolation which atheism has left as her most significant monument. Thus by what may be regarded as a natural process of colonial purification, and especially if aided, as it should be, by the paternal discretion and christianlike feeling of the government of a Christian country, the wastes of the earth must gradually be christianized;—until, the world itself having become at once *Christian* and *English*, the very names shall almost be convertible. Can we then refrain our happy and hopeful feelings as Christians, as patriots and as philanthropists, at a moment when Britain sits at home, like a watchful mother of a rising world;—at a time when, by her direct, or by her moral influence, she keeps in awe many whom she does not rule, and when the sceptre of England has become a symbol of safety, and a pledge of justice to many nations; and when the hand that holds that sceptre is screening from wrong the hut and hearth of savage tribes, on both sides the equator; at such a time, how does every motive, secular and religious, combine to enhance the earnestness of the desire, that a bright triumph of Spiritual Christianity at home—its purification from ancient corruptions—its diffusion among the neglected heathen of our great towns, and not less, its taking anew a

firm hold of the convictions of the upper and educated classes—that by all these means, the Gospel—the only hope of man, may, even in our times, plant its banner of love on every shore;—and moreover that, by the means of England, and through her influence, “the multitude of the islands” may rejoice, and howling wildernesses be reclaimed, until the old civilized world, hemmed in on all sides by a new and better social order, shall itself be reclaimed and regenerated!

Far are we from speaking of such events in the language of confident anticipation. All we affirm is, That the Gospel of Christ *tends* to bring them about; and that it will do so, should its influence in this country be much extended and refreshed.

#### IV.

We have to name *a fourth*, and a most important distinction of Spiritual Christianity, fitting it to be regarded as the true and only effective instrument of universal good to the human family. In naming what we have now in view, we must ask that candid attention, which may exclude the probability of a misunderstanding of our real meaning.

We affirm that Spiritual Christianity is peculiarly adapted to the purpose of diffusing truth and virtue through the world, because, *as a spiritual system*, IT IS ALWAYS SUPERIOR TO EVERY VISIBLE INSTITUTION. Such institutions, subject as they are to the control of man, and liable therefore always to per-

version and overthrow, must often obstruct, or utterly forbid the progress of the Gospel, if it were inextricably connected with them; or unless it were held to be separable from them, and of far higher importance than any, even the best of them. What then is our principle on this ground?—assuredly not that such institutions, whether more or less strictly ecclesiastical, are of little importance; or that they may be safely contemned, or hastily and recklessly overthrown, or dismantled, or despoiled. Certainly we have no such meaning as this. Assuredly we hold no such loose doctrine as this. On the contrary, if the present were a fit occasion on which to express our opinion on questions of ecclesiastical polity, we might perhaps carry our doctrine much further than would be likely to meet the concurrence of many here present. We may therefore think ourselves free from any fair imputation of laxity of belief in regard to the high importance of existing religious institutions.

But surely such institutions, at the best, are only means to an end; and the end must be greater than the means, always. Such institutions moreover, inasmuch as they have a local limitation, and are more or less intimately interwoven with whatever belongs to the civil and social existence of the people among whom they are found, and as they are administered, from year to year, by men—not inspired, they are liable to sway, on this side and on that; and do in fact partake of the dangerous heavings by which all human affairs are so often brought into jeopardy. It cannot therefore be wise to put our Christianity,

*without reserve*, on board even the fairest and best navigated ecclesiastical institution that has ever braved the storms.

What are the lessons which history teaches us on this point? What has come of the experiment to entrust a visible universal church with the spiritual welfare of the human race? How has the church of Rome acquitted herself of this usurped trust? The foulest corruptions, the most extraordinary blasphemies, the most atrocious crimes, and the darkest errors, doctrinal and moral, and all perpetuated through a long course of ages, these have been the fruits of the theory which would lodge an irresponsible and absolute power over Christianity with fallible man.

Christianity we must believe to be greater, and more permanent, and of wider extent, than *any means* that can be devised for maintaining, or for diffusing it. And in proportion as the Gospel is understood, in its purity and in its power—in proportion as it is felt to be a *spiritual religion*, this independence of whatever is local and visible will the more appear;—not indeed to the disparagement of visible institutions; but to the higher glory of the spiritual reality.

The warmest supporters of those associations for the propagation of religious truth, which distinguish our times, are not so fond as to imagine that the Gospel is all risked in their bark; or that the decay or dispersion of these societies, how much soever to be lamented, would seal its fate in the world!



Christianity, which has survived all empires, and all forms of opinion, and all human institutions, not only *will* survive all, but is at every moment superior to all, and must be allowed to take its high course, whether these institutions move with it, or are broken on their way.

We must therefore, in connexion with this important topic, once again, and finally, allude to those lately revived opinions to which we have several times adverted, as being peculiarly opposed to the progress of spiritual—of genuine Christianity.

It seems scarcely to need proof, that any system of opinions, the purport and tendency of which is to give an unusual prominence, and a paramount importance to visible institutions, and especially as historically transmitted and geographically defined, and which, with a severe consistency, denies the very name of Christian to whatever may be found beyond its pale, or may not acknowledge its jurisdiction, that such a system, so far as it takes effect, stands opposed to whatever is the most auspicious in the present age; and if permitted to work its will, must turn back the current of human affairs—a thousand years, and would confine the blessings of the Gospel within limits narrower than those of ancient Judaism. These exclusive opinions, so fondly embraced by many, are indeed—a “discipline of the secret,” likely enough to bury the Gospel in a cloister, along with the last hopes of happiness for mankind.

Whoever does not admit the independence of Christianity, as to the visible means of its mainte-

nance, and its superiority to all such means, reduces himself to the sad necessity of rejecting, even the most convincing evidence which may attest the triumphs of the Gospel under forms which he does not allow to be legitimate. The consequence must be, not indeed that such successes of “unauthentic zeal” are stayed in their course till he approves them;—but that he himself is driven further and further from whatever is substantial, whatever is benign, whatever is reasonable in the Christian system, until he finds a gloomy home, not in a church—but in a sepulchre.

No position can be imagined more undesirable, or indeed fearful, than will be that occupied by very many, should pure Christianity rapidly spread in the heathen world, under what they are pleased to call “irregular ministrations.” Such persons, rendered only so much the more obdurate by the copious evidence that is reaching them of the falseness of their theory, would be driven, not improbably, in desperation, to take part with the open enemies of all truth.

Christians better taught, are prepared to hail with unfeigned, and with unmixed pleasure, every instance, let it be found where it may, in which the lives and tempers of men are reformed on the Christian model; and, in perfect consistency with their principles, they will always think it their duty and privilege to take part in any endeavours that are sincerely and prudently instituted for imparting to the ignorant the blessings of truth.

How many perplexities are evaded by a hearty recognition of our axiom—That the Gospel is always more than the instrumentalities it employs! How much peace of conscience is connected with a steady adherence to the belief, That the rescue of immortal souls from sin and misery is a work which, when effected by Sovereign Mercy, we never need scruple to rejoice in!

It cannot well be doubted that the purest forms of Christianity, whatever they are, will, on the whole, be the most efficacious in extending it; if therefore we suppose all true Christians to be governed by the simple rule of aiding to promote the Gospel, under whatsoever form they see it to be advancing the most auspiciously—then it must happen that—The purest form of Christianity will, in the end, draw around itself all, or the greater number of sincere Christians; and so, by this simple process, the much desired church unity would be brought about, not by polemical, but by evangelical triumphs.

## V.

We come then to mention the *fifth* of those happy distinctions of Spiritual Christianity which warrant a reasonable hope of its diffusion, with all the blessings that attend it, throughout the earth.—

Spiritual Christianity offers a ground of cordial combination, for all purposes of religious benevolence, among its true adherents.

We have here to do with one of those frequent

instances in which a rule that, in theory, may seem beset with difficulties, ceases to be so, when honestly reduced to practice. While men of cold hearts and narrow understandings are propounding interminable questions, as to the possibility of giving contentment to the exquisite delicacy of their "consciences," when they are required to aid and assist in some good work—Christian men, whose consciences are informed by the instincts of love, find abundant comfort and pleasure in joining hands with their brethren, whenever any labours of charity demand their cooperation.

We do not hold ourselves bound to attempt a reply to the question of sanctimonious selfishness—"Who *is* my brother? who *is* my neighbour?" For the most exact and elaborate answer must fail to supply what is really wanting in the querist—the *heart* of a Christian; and as to those in whose bosoms such a heart beats, they never in fact put any such question.

In giving effect to the Christian principle of co-operation in works of charity, two conditions are always supposed:—the *first* is, that those who are thus summoned to "strive together" for promoting the welfare of their fellow-men are so far animated by Christian motives, and are so far governed by Christian principles, as to satisfy their brethren as to their claim to be treated with cordial affection. Verbal specifications of belief, on secondary points, are superseded by the confidence which a truly Christian deportment inspires. Nothing can be more frigid, or impertinent, or arrogant, than the



question—"Can I join hands with—Christ's true disciples, differing from me in points of belief?"

The *second* condition of Christian combinations for promoting benevolent designs, is — a genuine warmth of the benevolent affections, in those who so combine. We are not afraid to affirm it as a general truth that, where good men are seen withdrawing from this, that, and the other labours of love, on the plea of conscientious scruples, the *moral nature* with them will be found to be of small dimensions, or of slender proportions. If the moral temperament be vigorous, and the understanding not infirm, great motives will overrule inferior motives, and the impulses of benevolence will, with an irresistible momentum, break through those snares for the conscience which the Adversary, when driven to employ his last expedients, spreads in the way of Christian enterprises.

Hitherto, although frequently alluding to them, we have not distinctly spoken of those enterprises of Christian zeal and benevolence which stand forth as so remarkable a feature of the moral history of the present age, and which are its glory. We are compromised with none of these institutions;—we are pledged to none, as apologists; and yet are bound to all as Christians. None commands our servile or partisanlike support:—each commands our cordial good wishes, and the utmost aid we could give.

These pious and charitable associations are, collectively, the expression of a widely-diffused, and christianlike benevolence, which is indeed the praise

of Britain, and the admiration of the world; and which shall be the theme of posterity. Compared with any enterprises which heretofore have combined the hearts and energies of a people, is not the missionary enterprise noble and generous in its conception—heaven-like in its object and temper—unblamable in the means it adopts, and most benign, so far as it prospers, in its actual results?

And why has it not prospered more? Many reasons should be assigned in reply; but we are here content to say, That, undoubtedly, and not forgetting our dependence upon the divine aid, it would so prosper if it commanded, to a greater extent, and in proportion to its indisputable merits, the resources, the influence, the intelligent cooperation of the upper and educated classes of England.

The laborious endeavours now making, at so many points, to diffuse the blessings of the Gospel, and with them the blessings of social order, peace, and wealth through the world—these endeavours, on every principle of mere reason, of benevolence, and of Christian feeling, deserve—nay, demand, far more support than they actually receive from the noble, and the learned—from those whose position in society, or whose accomplishments and talents, would render their cordial cooperation incalculably important.

What, if some of these societies may have erred?—What if we relish not their style, or distaste their proceedings, or question some of their averments? We must not look at any human agencies in so sickly a manner, as would lead us to abandon what is great

and good, on the plea of blemishes from which nothing human is exempt. Posterity, we may be sure, will not thus look at the missionary zeal of the nineteenth century ; but will rather regard the *broad intention*, and the prominent purport of these labours of love. If these labours fail of their desired success, yet the facts of such an endeavour having been made, will not be blotted from the page of history ;—and let us think of it as certain, that those who shall read that page, will deal, not very gently, with any by whose immediate fault so bright a hope of renovation for the world, was suffered to expire. But on the contrary, if this endeavour succeed, and if, as we firmly believe, the present evangelic labours of this country are as the dawn of day in the world's history—if indeed we are now standing, as on the very confines of light and darkness—if long centuries of moral desolation are to be followed by far longer eras of truth, virtue, peace, let us take care that we ourselves be not fixed upon those confines, as “pillars of salt”—the monuments of unbelief and selfish infatuation !

There is one aspect of the evangelizing associations now referred to, which does not seem to have attracted the attention it deserves ; and which, as we venture to affirm, might not improperly be seriously considered at the present moment by the upper and educated classes. We refer to the *reflex influence* of these combinations upon the classes to which mainly they owe their support, and by which they are governed.

The great extent and depth of this reflected influence can be estimated only by those (and but imperfectly even by such) whose position in society, and whose habits have enabled them, at leisure, to become acquainted with the sentiments and intellectual condition of the masses from which Missionary Societies draw four-fifths of their revenues. These contributors, ranging from the artisan class, and upward toward the higher grades, and including a fair proportion of the moderate opulence and average intelligence of the country, *are doing for themselves*, full as much, in every sense, as they are doing for the heathen world;—and we say this without intending any disparagement of the missionary work abroad.

We could not easily over-rate the extent or importance of that moral and intellectual advancement which, in the course of the last thirty or forty years, has resulted directly from the diffusion of the missionary spirit in England. It has carried with it, and has conveyed to many thousands of the middle orders, a large amount and variety of general knowledge, geographical, historical, statistical; it has vastly expanded the modes of thinking usual with these orders; it has ennobled their sentiments; it has habituated them to generous, and, in a true sense, to *liberal* courses of behaviour; it has thrown into discredit many frivolous or sensual employments, or amusements; it has trained thousands of young persons in the inestimably important habit of caring, in a sensitive and active manner, for the welfare of others; and has much diverted from the channel of



sordid selfishness, the ordinary current of thought. If we will hear and believe it, the missionary temper, diffused as it is on all sides, although attaching but to a portion of the people, has at length educated a class of citizens which, from its breadth of feeling, its fair intelligence, its familiarity with the course of events throughout the world, and its high feeling of whatever is just, humane, and christianlike, may prove itself, in future perils of the state, the principal stay of a wise and religious government.

The influence of the missionary work in sustaining and extending some religious communities which, years ago, were threatened with extinction, is not one of the least remarkable of its effects ; and if, at an early period of these evangelizing institutions, the several evangelic bodies had so seen their corporate interests, as to have amalgamated, on this ground—to have dismissed their differences as frivolous—to have consolidated their resources, to have distributed the work before them on some consistent principle of the division of labour ; and in a word to have chalked their path of benevolent universal conquest, from east to west, from north to south—if these things had happened, statesmen might have seen, with amazement, the government of the world in some measure taken out of their hands, by a moral power of continually increasing energy.

No such concentration or condensation of the evangelic zeal has had place. But it is not certain that it may not in future. Whether it does or not, it is unquestionable that this benevolent care for

the world, now exercised almost exclusively by the middle classes—this effective, and morally real colonial administration, cannot but confer a force, real also, upon those in whose hands it rests; and therefore it does not leave the social balance between them and the upper classes altogether unaffected.

Whatever inference these considerations might suggest, it is abundantly certain that there can be but one mode in which an influence so wide and important can be shared by those who might think a good portion of it their due.—The power we are speaking of is—*a moral and religious power*; and if we except some very transient participation of it, it can be wielded only in the mode of a sincere, ingenuous, and religious sympathy with the great purposes that are the objects of it.

No factitious zeal, no politic compliances, no stooping to conquer, could avail for the purpose intended, or beyond the term of a few months. The evangelic work, inseparable as it is from Christianity when not curbed by despotism, would quickly fail, and reach its end, unless carried forward by a genuine religious impulse. -

There is then a vast movement going on near to us:—it embraces the earth:—it throws back upon its originators a proportionate moral power, a power not very remote, in some of its bearings, from political power; and yet it is such as can be exercised by none but those whose religious convictions are sincere and vigorous—by none but Christian men! The glare and glitter of life may conceal these

*realities* from our view ; but the more they are considered, and the better they are understood, the more will they seem to deserve the serious regard of those who would not choose to be ignorant of what may even suddenly come to press itself upon their attention.

At the commencement of these Lectures we affirmed, what we most fully believe to be a fact — the inseparable connexion of Christianity with the welfare, nay, with the political existence of the British empire, and its cherished institutions. A course of events rapidly evolving, and tending toward some unknown issue, is convincing all parties — That a merely secular, or political and heartless Christianity, will neither subserve the purposes of religion, nor even be able to sustain itself against the pressure of many hostile forces.—It is proved, it is understood—it is admitted, that our Christianity must have a firm hold of our most sincere convictions—that it must be deeply seated in our affections—that it must command us as an independent power, as a positive authority, superior to secular influence, and as a PRINCIPLE which we may neither modify, nor compromise ; but which we must honour by an implicit, yet reasonable homage.

This understood, as it seems to be on all sides among those who seriously think on the subject, a choice is to be made between those two forms of Christianity which alone are positive, authoritative, independent, and in a word potent, or which possess any intrinsic energy.

These two competing systems, utterly incompatible one with the other, as they are, and founded upon principles exclusive one of the other, and which have never consisted the one with the other, even for a day, have been brought into vehement collision by the controversies of the last seven years. It is a collision for which all things, although we saw it not before-hand, were ripe; and the issue of which must speedily bisect the professedly Christian world; and at no very remote period after this partition has been effected, one of the two must meet its fate.

We shall not incur the risk of being accused of misrepresentation in attempting any definition or description of that one of these forms which we regard as antichristian. But how imperfectly soever our task in the present instance may have been performed, we can scarcely have altogether failed to convey, in an intelligible manner, what we regard as essential to that other form of our religion which we assume to be alone genuine, apostolic, and spiritual;—the Christianity which, as we believe, will be found in the inspired pages, by those who, in humble reliance upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit, give themselves to the serious perusal of the only authentic Rule of Faith.





## N O T E S.

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### NOTE TO PAGE 34.

EVEN if we were to apply the phrase "Moral Evidence" in the vague manner in which it is often applied to human testimony, under whatever circumstances rendered; it must be granted, in very many instances, to reach the highest point of certainty. If many hundred persons, in dismay and disorder, pass my gate during the day, and all affirm the same thing—That London has been destroyed by an earthquake;—if some of these homeless persons coolly and particularly describe the catastrophe, while the phrenzied shrieks of others attest the fact in another manner—is this amount of testimony to be held as still questionable, because it is nothing more than "moral evidence?" At the moment when the first band of these wanderers came up, I might have been employed in following a mathematical demonstration. In turning from Euclid to listen to these tales of woe, I do indeed turn from one species of proof to another; but do I also descend from certainties, to mere probabilities? None would say this.

As to facts transmitted by books, the certainty of them may be of the very highest kind, even when the mass of evidence, or its *apparent bulk*, is very small. In such instances certainty results from the circumstances of the case; and it is to be remembered that it is in no degree liable to be lessened by mere lapse of time. The existence of Shakespeare's Richard III., in the time of James I., may now be

ascertained without a doubt;—but, supposing our literature to pass down entire to a distant age, the proof of this fact will be as good then, as it is to-day. Or otherwise to state the same case, we may now be as sure of the antiquity of the “Clouds” of Aristophanes, as we are of the date of the “Merry Wives of Windsor.” And if a question relate to the genuineness of a single verse, a *very small amount* of satisfactory critical proof, may be enough to exclude all reasonable scepticism, and to warrant the decision—“It is absolutely certain that this verse was from the hand of the author.”

We greatly misjudge historical questions—

—When we assume them to be not susceptible of conclusive proof because established by Testimony, or Moral Evidence:—

—When we hesitate to receive them as certain on account of the mere lapse of Time; or—

—When we suppose historical certainty to depend upon the larger or smaller amount, or bulk of the evidence adduced. Good proof is good, whether it fill half a page, or a volume; and whether it have stood on a page fifty, or two thousand years.

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#### NOTE TO PAGE 40.

THAT corruption of the Christian religion which its inspired teachers predicted as immediately to follow its first promulgation, is in one of these prophetic passages, called a “*mystery of iniquity*,” which is the inspired designation also of the ripened “abominations” of the Papacy; and it is remarkable that this endeavour to hold back the Truth—to “reserve” the principal elements of Christianity for a privileged class, has been the characteristic of each successive form of the apostasy from the second century to the nineteenth. Not less remarkable is the progression of these endeavours from what was a very natural imitation of the philosophic economy of the same age, to its consummation in the stern spiritual despotism which

lodged the key of knowledge in the hands of the "Vicar of Christ."

Instead of "preaching the Gospel" to the people, without reserve, and in all simplicity, as the Apostles had done, the Rulers of the Church, ambitious of the dignity belonging to the Teachers of a profound enigmatic doctrine, drew a line around themselves and the favoured few—the "initiated," to whom the depths of this new philosophy were to be opened. But this proceeding was alone enough to vitiate the Christian ministry, compelling, as it did, the Teacher to impart to the mass of the people *something less* than the Truth, and to the initiated—*something more*. The great principles of the Gospel were regarded as too sacred for the populace, and were felt to be too simple—or too little in the style of the philosophy of the age, to satisfy the "itching ears" of those who expected profundities.

When the gnostic infection was admitted by the Church, it brought with it a rule of *caste* still more injurious in its effects; for it assumed the fact of a *natural* inequality among men—as "spiritual," or as "physical" and animal, by destination of birth. The mass of men could never be taught—"the Truth." This doctrine, directly opposed as it is to the first principle of the Gospel, could not consist with even an approximation to apostolic simplicity and evangelic zeal. From the time that it gained ascendancy in the Church little was seen within it but spiritual arrogance, on the part of the few, and the most abject prostration of the many at the feet of the clergy and the monks.

Under the ascetic discipline, which reached its mature condition in the fourth century, the gnostic principle of reserving "Truth" as the distinction of a class, assumed the distinctness proper to the rules of a visible institute. The monks were the only *Christians*, in the full sense of the term; while the herd of mankind might be allowed to gather the crumbs of instruction, that fell from their master's table.

The last step of this doctrine of darkness was that which confided all knowledge to the keeping of "the Church," that is to say—of the hierarchy, governed by a single will, and armed with absolute and terrible powers, secular and spiritual.



It is not easy to fix the moment at which this empire of night dates its commencement; but the early part of the thirteenth century may be named as the hour of the most pitchy blackness.

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NOTE TO PAGE 77.

THE PROTESTANT Church of England does not simply affirm the "Romish doctrine" concerning "worshipping and adoration, as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saints," to be "a fond thing;" but that these superstitions—elsewhere pointedly and universally reprobated, had been "*vainly invented*." By whom then *invented*? It is not the usage of ingenuous writers or speakers, when they would designate those who may have given the last finish to a work which others had long before originated, to call them its *inventors*. Whatever absurdities may have attached to the "Romish" doctrine of the invocation of saints, or to the "Romish" practice of the adoration of relics—the *doctrine*, in its plenitude of impiety, and the *practice*, with all its shocking enormities, are *at least* as ancient as that age from which it is said we should do well to learn our divinity, and our modes of worship, rather than from the age of the Reformation.

This now professed preference can mean nothing, if it does not mean that the invocation of saints, and the worshipping of relics which the Reformers indignantly rejected, and which the Nicene divines as sedulously promoted, should be, by ourselves, religiously restored.

Finding the intended limits of this volume already exceeded, I am compelled to refer the reader for the evidence bearing on this point, to the SIXTH Number of "Ancient Christianity," in which a sample of the frightful idolatries of the fourth century is furnished. These, I think, will bear out the assertion, That, if the Christianity of the Nicene Church were restored in England, the difference between England, and Spain, Italy, or Belgium, would be perceptible only to the keenest eyes.

Antiquity and Romanism differ not so much as the Religion of English Roman Catholics differs from the Popery of Irish Roman Catholics. And in truth the gross superstitions and shocking abuses of the fourth century far more nearly resemble Irish, than they do English Catholicism. It were therefore better for us to accept these same doctrines and practices in their modern, than in their ancient guise. Both however are absolutely exclusive of apostolic Christianity.

THE END.











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